
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<http://books.google.com>





All his glory and be
and there he pleaseth

Many a visit doth he
man, sweet is his com
delightful his consolati
a familiarity exceeding

II. O faithful soul,
this thy Spouse, that
come to thee, and dw

For so he saith: *If*
will keep my word, an
and we will make
John xiv.

Make room then
and deny entrance to

When thou hast C
he is sufficient for th
thee, and will be thy
all things, so that th
men.

For men quickly
fail: but Christ rema
by us firmly to the en

III. There is no
put in a frail mortal
fitable and beloved:
taken, if sometimes
cross thee.

They that are with
against thee to-morr
hand often change lib

Place thy whole c



Handwritten text on the left page, appearing to be a list or index of entries. The text is dense and difficult to read due to the image quality, but it seems to follow a structured format with multiple lines of text per entry.

Handwritten text on the right page, which is mostly blank. There are some faint, illegible markings and possibly a few lines of text that are too blurry to transcribe accurately.

33.

115.



600041918T

THE
FOLLOWING OF CHRIST.

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

S. BENNETT, PRINTER, NOTTINGHAM.

£

THE

Following of Christ,

IN FOUR BOOKS,

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN,

BY THE RT. REV. AND VEN.

RICHARD CHALLONER, D. D. V. A.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS AND A PRAYER

At the end of each Chapter ;

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY THE REV. JAMES JONES.

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR KEATING & BROWN,

28, Duke Street, Grosvenor Square, and 66, Paternoster Row.

M D C C C X X I I I .

115.



TO THE READER.

THE Editor of this edition of *The Venerable Bishop Challoner's* version of *The Following of Christ*, has subjoined to each chapter *Practical Reflections and a Prayer*, translated from the French of *The Rev. Father De Gonnellieu. S. J.*

The high estimation, in which these have been held, and a hope of encreasing, in this country, the fruit which "the most excellent of the books of men" has long produced, have prevailed upon him to offer them to the public in an English dress.

In the *Reflections*, the maxims contained in the text are reduced to the most simple and practicable forms. That the heart may be induced to love them and the will inclined to practise them, is the purport of each *Prayer* to God, who alone can move the heart and inflame the will, discover to us

the loveliness of virtue and enable us to perform good works.

May he, in his infinite goodness, vouchsafe to accept and give a blessing to an undertaking which was commenced and is now most humbly and devoutly presented to him, for the promotion of his greater honour and glory, and the sanctification and salvation of souls.

CONTENTS.

BOOK I.

CHAP.	PAGE
1—Of following Christ and despising all the vanities of the world.....	1
2—Of having an humble sentiment of one's self...	4
3—Of the doctrine of truth.....	7
4—Of prudence in our doings.....	12
5—Of the reading the holy scriptures.....	14
6—Of inordinate affections	16
7—Of flying vain hope and pride.....	18
8—Of shunning too much familiarity.....	21
9—Of obedience and subjection.....	23
10—Of avoiding superfluity of words.....	26
11—Of acquiring peace & zeal of spiritual progress	29
12—Of the advantage of adversity.....	33
13—Of resisting temptation	35
14—Of avoiding rash judgment.....	40
15—Of works done out of charity.....	42
16—Of bearing the defects of others.....	45
17—Of a monastic life.....	48
18—Of the examples of the holy fathers.....	51
19—Of the exercises of a good religious man.....	55
20—Of the love of solitude and silence.	60
21—Of compunction of heart.....	65
22—Of the consideration of the misery of man....	69
23—Of the thoughts of death.....	74
24—Of judgment and the punishment of sins.....	80
25—Of the fervent amendment of our whole life...	86

BOOK II.

1—Of interior conversation.....	95
2—Of humble submission	102
3—Of a good peaceable man.....	104
4—Of a pure mind and simple intention	108

CHAP.	PAGE
5—Of the consideration of one's self	111
6—Of the joy of a good conscience.....	114
7—Of the love of Jesus above all things	118
8—Of familiar friendship with Jesus.....	121
9—Of the want of all comfort	126
10—Of gratitude for the grace of God	132
11—Of the small number of the lovers of the cross of Jesus.....	136
12—Of the King's highway of the Holy Cross	140

BOOK III.

1—Of the internal speech of Christ to a faithful soul	150
2—That truth speaks within us without the noise of words	153
3—That the words of God are to be heard with humility, and that many weigh them not... A prayer to implore the grace of devotion	159
4—That we ought to walk in truth and humility in God's presence	162
5—Of the wonderful effect of divine love	166
6—Of the proof of a true lover	173
7—That grace is to be hid, under the guardian- ship of humility.....	178
8—Of acknowledging our unworthiness in the sight of God	184
9—That all things are to be referred to God, as to our last end.....	188
10—That it is sweet to serve God, despising this world.....	190
11—That the desires of our heart, are to be exam- ined and moderated	195
12—Of learning patience and of fighting against concupiscence	198
13—Of the obedience of an humble subject, after the example of Jesus Christ.....	201
14 Of considering the secret judgments of God, lest we be puffed up by our good works	205
15—How we are to be disposed, and what we are to say, when we desire any thing	208
A prayer for fulfilling the will of God	209
16—That true comfort is to be sought in God alone	212
17—That we ought to cast all our care upon God...	215

CONTENTS.

vii

CHAP.	PAGE
18—That temporal miseries are to be borne with patience, after the example of Jesus Christ..	217
19—Of bearing injuries, and who is proved to be truly patient.....	221
20—Of the confession of our own infirmity, and of the miseries of this life.....	224
21—That we are to rest in God above all goods and gifts.....	228
22—Of the remembrance of the manifold benefits of God.....	234
23—Of four things which bring much peace.....	238
A prayer against evil thoughts.....	239
A prayer for the enlightening of the mind....	239
24—That we are not to be curious in inquiring into the lives of others.....	242
25—In what things the firm peace of the heart and true progress doth consist.....	244
26—Of the eminence of a free mind, which humble prayer procures better than reading....	247
27—That self-love chiefly keeps a person back from the sovereign Good.....	251
A prayer for the cleansing of the heart, and the obtaining of heavenly wisdom.....	252
28—Against the tongues of detractors.....	255
29—How in the time of tribulation God is to be invoked and blessed.....	257
30—Of asking the divine assistance, and of confidence of recovering grace.....	260
31—Of disregarding all things created, that so we may find the Creator.....	265
32—Of denying ourselves, and renouncing cupidity.....	269
33—Of the inconstancy of our heart, and of directing our intention to God.....	273
34—That he that loves God relishes him above all things, and in all things.....	276
35—That there is no being secure from temptation in this life.....	279
36—Against the vain judgments of men.....	283
37—Of a pure and full resignation of ourselves for the obtaining freedom of heart.....	286
38—Of the good government of ourselves in outward things, and of having recourse to God in dangers.....	289

CHAP.	PAGE
39—That a man must not be over eager in his affairs	292
40—That a man hath no good of himself, and that he cannot glory in anything	294
41—Of the contempt of all temporal honour	298
42—That our peace is not to be placed in men	301
43—Against vain and worldly learning	304
44—Of not drawing to ourselves exterior things...	307
45—That credit is not to be given to all men; and that men are prone to offend in words.....	310
46—Of having confidence in God, when words arise against us.....	314
47—That all grievous things are to be endured for life everlasting.....	319
48—Of the day of eternity, and of the miseries of this life.....	322
49—Of the desire of eternal life, and how great things are promised to them that fight	328
50—How a desolate person ought to offer himself into the hands of God... ..	334
51—That we must exercise ourselves in humble works, when we cannot attain to high things	341
52—That a man ought not to esteem himself worthy of consolation, but rather deserving of stripes.....	344
53—That the grace of God is not communicated to the earthly-minded	348
54—Of the different motions of nature and grace..	352
55—Of the corruption of nature, and of the efficacy of divine grace	360
56—That we ought to deny ourselves and to imitate Christ by the cross.....	365
57—That a man should not be too much dejected when he falls into some defects	370
58—Of not searching into high matters, nor into the secret judgments of God.....	374
59—That all hope and confidence is to be fixed in God alone	381

BOOK IV.

OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

1—With how great reverence Christ is to be received.....	387
--	-----

CONTENTS.

ix

CHAP.	PAGE
2—That the great goodness and charity of God is shewn to man in this sacrament	397
3—That it is profitable to communicate often.	404
4—That many benefits are bestowed on them who communicate devoutly.	410
5—Of the dignity of the sacrament, and of the priestly state.	415
6—A petition concerning the exercise before communion	424
7—Of the examination of one's own conscience, and of a resolution of amendment.	426
8—Of the oblation of Christ on the cross, and of the resignation of ourselves	432
9—That we must offer ourselves, and all that is ours to God, and pray for all	435
10—That the holy communion is not lightly to be forborne.	439
11—That the holy body of Christ and the holy scripture are most necessary to a faithful soul	446
12—That he who is to communicate ought to prepare himself for Christ with great diligence	453
13—That a devout soul ought to desire with her whole heart to be united to Christ in the sacrament.	458
14—Of the ardent desire of some devout persons to receive the body of Christ.	465
15—That the grace of devotion is obtained by humility and self-denial	469
16—That we ought to lay open our necessities to Christ, and crave his grace.	474
17—Of a fervent love and vehement desire to receive Christ	480
18—That a man be not a curious searcher into this sacrament, but an humble follower of Christ, submitting his sense to holy faith . . .	483

THE
FOLLOWING OF CHRIST.

BOOK I.

Chapter First.

Of following Christ, and despising all the vanities
of the world.

I. *HE that followeth me, walketh not in darkness* saith our Lord. John viii. 12. These are the words of Christ, by which we are admonished that we must imitate his life and manners, if we would be truly enlightened, and delivered from all blindness of heart.

Let it then be our chief study to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ.

II. The doctrine of Christ surpasseth all the doctrines of the saints: and whosoever hath the Spirit, will find therein a hidden manna.

A

But it happeneth that many, by frequent hearing the gospel, are very little affected: because they have not the Spirit of Christ.

But he who would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ: must study to make his whole life conformable to that of Christ.

III. What doth it avail thee, to discourse profoundly of the Trinity: if thou be void of humility, and consequently displeasing to the Trinity?

In truth, sublime words make not a man holy and just: but a virtuous life maketh him dear to God.

I had rather feel compunction, than know its definition.

If thou didst know the whole bible by heart, and the sayings of all the philosophers: what would it all profit thee, without the love of God and his grace?

Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, besides loving God, and serving him alone.

This is the highest wisdom: by despising the world, to tend to heavenly kingdoms.

IV. It is vanity therefore to seek after riches which must perish, and to trust in them.

It is vanity also to be ambitious of honours, and to raise one's self to a high station.

It is vanity to follow the lusts of the flesh: and to desire that for which thou must afterwards be grievously punished.

It is vanity to wish for a long life: and to take little care of leading a good life.

It is vanity to mind only this present life: and not to look forward into those things which are to come.

It is vanity to love that which passeth with all speed: and not to hasten thither where everlasting joy remains.

V. Often remember that proverb: *The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.* Eccles. i. 8.

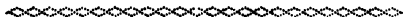
Study therefore to withdraw thy heart from the love of visible things, and to turn thyself to things invisible. For they that follow their sensuality defile their conscience, and lose the grace of God.

Practical Reflections.

IF we would really honor Jesus Christ, we must apply ourselves to know him, to love him, and to follow him in the practice of every christian virtue. This is absolutely necessary for salvation; as we cannot become true christians, but by knowing, loving and following Christ. To pretend to please our Blessed Saviour by a profound knowledge of his divinity, without endeavouring to follow his example, without living as he lived, would be most dangerously to delude ourselves.

Prayer.

WHAT will it avail me, O Jesus, to study and to know in part thy supreme greatness, and the most sublime of thy mysteries, if I endeavour not to derive advantage and merit from them, by cherishing thy dispositions and copying thy virtues: since, to save my soul I must not only know, but practice, what thou hast taught me by thy word, and manifested in thy life, for my imitation, I must know and practice my religion? This, my Saviour, is the grace which I now ask of thee, with a firm hope that thou wilt grant my petition. Amen.



Chapter Second.

Of having an humble sentiment of one's self.

I. ALL men naturally desire to know; but what doth knowledge avail without the fear of God?

Indeed an humble husbandman, that serveth God; is better than a proud philosopher, who, neglecting himself, considers the course of the heavens.

He, who knows himself well, is mean in his own eyes, and is not delighted with being praised by men.

If I should know all things that are in the world, and should not be in charity: what help would it be to me in the sight of God, who will judge me by my deeds?

II. Leave off that excessive desire of knowing: because there is found therein much distraction and deceit.

They who are learned, are desirous to appear and to be called wise.

There are many things, the knowledge of which is of little or no profit to the soul.

And he is very unwise who attends to other things than what may serve to his salvation.

Many words do not satisfy the soul; but a good life gives ease to the mind; and a pure conscience affords a great confidence in God.

III. The more and better thou knowest, the more heavy will be thy judgment, unless thy life be also more holy.

Be not therefore puffed up with any art or science: but rather fear upon account of the knowledge which is given thee.

If it seems to thee that thou knowest many things, and understandest them well enough: know at the same time that there are many more things of which thou art ignorant.

Be *not high minded*, but rather acknowledge thy ignorance.

Why wouldst thou prefer thyself to any

one, since there are many more learned and skilful in the law than thyself?

If thou wouldst know and learn any thing to the purpose: love to be unknown, and esteemed as nothing.

IV. This is the highest, and most profitable lesson, truly to know, and to despise ourselves.

To have no opinion of ourselves, and to think always well and commendably of others, is great wisdom and high perfection.

If thou shouldst see another openly sin, or commit some heinous crime, yet thou oughtest not to esteem thyself better: because thou knowest not how long thou mayest remain in a good state.

We are all frail: but see thou think no one more frail than thyself.

Practical Reflections.

THE thoughts of man, says the scripture, are vain and useless, if, in them, he does not apply his mind to know and to love God, to forget and to hate himself. The simple and lively faith of a soul which believes all that God teaches, without examination or hesitation, and performs all that he requires for the attainment of salvation, is preferable to all divine and human sciences, which, of themselves, without such a faith, only fill the mind with pride, leave the heart dry, and avail nought for salvation.

Prayer.

MODERATE, O Jesus, my eagerness to know so much, and correct my negligence in doing so little for salvation; since, thou wilt not judge me according to what I have known, but by what I have done, or neglected to do, to obtain it. Can I apply my thoughts to know thee thoroughly, and not admire and love thee? and can I completely know myself and not despise and hate myself? O life unknown! life hidden in Jesus Christ, in God! what an excellent means, art thou, of sanctification and salvation, yet how little art thou practiced amongst christians! Grant, O Lord, that all may know, esteem, and love it, and be directed by it. Amen.

**Chapter Third.**

Of the doctrine of Truth.

I. HAPPY is he whom *truth* teacheth by itself, not by figures and words that pass, but as it is in itself.

Our opinion, and our sense, often deceive us, and discover but little.

What signifies making a great dispute

about abstruse and obscure matters, for not knowing of which we shall not be questioned at the day of judgment.

It is a great folly for us to neglect things profitable and necessary, and willingly to busy ourselves about those which are curious and hurtful.—We have eyes and see not.

II. And what need we concern ourselves about questions of philosophy?

He to whom the *Eternal Word* speaketh, is set at liberty from a multitude of opinions.

From *one Word* are all things, and this *one* all things speak: and this is *the Beginning which also speaks to us.* John vii. 23.

Without this *Word* no one understands or judges rightly.

He to whom all things are *one*,† and who draws all things to *one*,—and who sees all things in *one*,—may be steady in heart, and peaceably repose in God.

O *Truth*, my God, make me *one* with thee in everlasting love.

I am wearied with often reading and hearing many things: in thee is *all* that I will or desire.

Let all teachers hold their peace; let all creatures be silent in thy sight: speak thou alone to me.

† The Author seems here to allude to that passage of St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 2. where he says, “That he desired to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

III. The more a man is united within himself, and interiorly simple; the more and higher things doth he understand without labour: because he receives the light of understanding from above.

A pure, simple, and steady spirit, is not dissipated by a multitude of affairs: because he performs them all to the honour of God, and endeavours to be at rest within himself, and free from all seeking of himself.

Who is a greater hinderance and trouble to thee, than thine own unmortified affection of heart?

A good and devout man first disposes his works inwardly, which he is to do outwardly.

Neither do they draw him to the desires of an inordinate inclination: but he bends them to the rule of right reason.

Who has a stronger conflict than he who strives to overcome himself?

And this must be our business, to strive to overcome ourselves, and daily to gain strength against ourselves, and to grow better and better.

IV. All perfections in this life are attended with some imperfections: and all our speculations with a certain obscurity.

The humble knowledge of thyself is a surer way to God, than the deepest search after science.

Learning is not to be blamed, nor the mere knowledge of any thing, which is good

in itself, and ordained by God: but a good conscience and a virtuous life is always to be preferred before it.

But because many make it more their study to know, than to live well: therefore are they often deceived, and bring forth none, or very little fruit.

V. Oh! if men would use as much diligence in rooting out vices and planting virtues, as they do in proposing questions: there would not be so great evils committed, nor scandals among the people, nor so much relaxation in monasteries.

Verily, when the day of judgment comes, we shall not be examined what we have read, but what we have done: nor how learnedly we have spoken, but how religiously we have lived.

Tell me now where are all those great doctors, with whom thou wast well acquainted, whilst they were living, and flourished in learning?

Now others possess their livings, and I know not whether they ever think of them.

In their life-time they seemed to be something: and now they are not spoken of.

VI. Oh! how quickly doth the glory of the world pass away! Would to God their lives had been answerable to their learning! then would they have studied and read well.

How many perish in the world through

vain learning, who take little care of the service of God?

And because they chuse rather to be great than to be humble, therefore they are lost in their own imaginations.

He is truly great, who is great in charity.

He is truly great, who is little in his own eyes: and makes no account of the height of honour.

He is truly prudent, who looks upon all earthly things as dung, that he may gain Christ.

And he is very learned indeed, who does the will of God, and renounces his own will.

Practical Reflections.

To study the truths of religion, not so much to know as to practice them; to listen to the divine word, which speaks more to the heart than to the understanding; to know and to do what is necessary for salvation, is the true science of a christian. I am weary of speculative knowledge which does not change nor move my heart, but only flatters the curiosity of my mind; I am tired of knowing and saying so much concerning eternal truths and salvation, and yet doing so little to obtain it.

Prayer.

O JESUS! who hast taught us that not all those who say *Lord, Lord*, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only such as do the will of thy father, whose lives correspond with their belief; grant us a truly christian spirit, a christian heart, and guide us in the paths of a christian life. Grant that I may become detached from all things, and in all things seek thee alone. Grant that I may direct all my knowledge, my whole capacity, all my happiness, and all my exertions, to please thee, to love thee, and to obtain thy love for time and eternity. Amen.

**Chapter Fourth.**

Of prudence in our doings.

I. WE must not be easy in giving credit to every word or suggestion: but carefully and leisurely weigh the matter according to God.

Alas! such is our weakness, that we often more readily believe and speak of another that which is evil, than that which is good.

But perfect men do not easily give credit to every report: because they know man's

weakness, which is very prone to evil, and very subject to fail in words.

II. It is great wisdom not to be rash in our doings: nor to maintain too obstinately our own opinion.

As also not to believe every man's word: nor presently to tell others the things which we have heard or believed.

Consult with a wise and conscientious man: and seek rather to be instructed by one that is better, than to follow thine own inventions.

A good life makes a man wise according to God, and expert in many things. The more humble a man is in himself, and more subject to God, the more wise will he be in all things, and the more at peace.

Practical Reflections.

NOTHING is more opposite to charity, or more fatal to salvation, than the evil reports we make of one another, whether they be true or false; because they irritate the mind, disorder the heart, foment divisions and embitter hatreds, and because we cannot obtain God's pardon for them, unless we resolve, in our confessions, to repair the evil we have done and to reconcile those we may have set at variance. We should therefore neither spread evil reports of others, nor listen to them; and if we do hear any thing against

our neighbour, we should be careful not to repeat it.

Prayer.

GRANT, O my Saviour, that I may observe, with the greatest nicety, that precept of charity towards my neighbour, which thou gavest us when thou didst command us to love our neighbour as thou hast loved us; since, this precept is absolutely necessary for salvation. But give us also that delicacy of charity, which prevents us from wounding it in any way, for thou hast said, that to offend our neighbour, is to wound the apple of thine eye. Grant therefore, that I may avoid thy displeasure, by not incurring the displeasure of my neighbour. Amen.



Chapter Fifth.

Of reading the holy Scriptures.

I. TRUTH is to be sought for in holy scripture, not eloquence.

All holy scripture ought to be read with that spirit with which it was made.

We must rather seek for profit in the scriptures, than for subtlety of speech.

We ought as willingly to read devout and simple books: as those that are high and profound.

Let not the authority of the writer offend thee, whether he was of little or great learning: but let the love of pure truth lead thee to read.

Inquire not who said this: but attend to what is said.

II. Men pass away: but *the truth of the Lord remains for ever.*

God speaks many ways to us: without respect of persons.

Our curiosity often hinders us in reading the scriptures, when we attempt to understand and discuss that which should be simply passed over.

If thou wilt receive profit, read with humility, simplicity, and faith: and seek not at any time the fame of being learned.

Willingly inquire after and hear with silence the words of the saints: and be pleased with the parables of the ancients: for they are not spoken without cause.

Practical Reflections.

READ the sacred scriptures and books of piety, with the same spirit in which they were written; that is, read them in quest of truth, for instruction, for edification, and to bring thee to a truly christian way of life.

Read the holy Scripture with faith, humility respect, and docility, praying the Holy Ghost who dictated it, to enable thee to understand it, to relish it, and to practice it.

Prayer.

SPEAK, my God, speak to my heart and change it, while the truths which I read, strike and convince my mind. Grant that being instructed in thy law, and in thy holy will by the reading of good books, I may follow them in all things, that so, what thou teachest, may ever be the rule of my conduct. Amen.



Chapter Sixth.

Of inordinate affections.

I. Whosoever a man desires any thing inordinately, he is presently disquieted within himself.

The proud and covetous are never easy.

The poor and humble of spirit, live in much peace.

The man that is not yet perfectly dead to himself, is soon tempted and overcome with small and trifling things.

He that is weak in spirit, and in a manner yet carnal and inclined to sensible things, can hardly withdraw himself wholly from earthly desires.

And therefore he is often sad, when he withdraws himself from them: and is easily moved to anger if any one thwarts him.

II. And if he has pursued his inclinations, he is presently tormented with the guilt of his conscience: because he has followed his passions, which help him not at all towards the peace he sought for.

It is then by resisting our passions, that we are to find true peace of heart, and not by being slaves to them.

There is no peace therefore in the heart of a *carnal* man, nor in a man that is addicted to outward things; but only in a fervent spiritual man.

Practical Reflections.

THE peace of the soul, next to the grace of God, is the greatest of blessings and we should spare no pains to maintain it within us. But we can neither obtain nor preserve this peace of the soul but by resisting our passions and irregular desires; for the more we endeavour to satisfy them, the more restless do they make us, the more we fight against them, the less trouble do they give us; the more we resist them, the more do they leave us in peace.

Prayer.

GIVE us, O Lord, this interior peace, this repose of conscience, this tranquillity, which raises our confidence in thy goodness that thou wilt carry on and complete the work thy mercy has begun in us; this peace of God which surpasseth all understanding, which keeps our minds and our hearts in thy love, and which thou alone canst give. Calm the storms and emotions of our passions, by giving us courage to overcome them. Grant that our desires may become submissive to reason, our reason to faith, and the whole man to God. Amen.

**Chapter Seventh.**

Of flying vain hope and pride.

I. HE is vain who puts his trust in men, or in creatures.

Be not ashamed to serve others, and to appear poor in the world, for the love of Jesus Christ.

Confide not in thyself: but place thy hope in God.

Do what is in thy power, and God will be with thy good will.

Trust not in thy own knowledge, nor in the cunning of any man living: but rather in the grace of God, who helps the humble, and humbles those who presume of themselves.

II. Glory not in riches, if thou hast them; nor in friends, because they are powerful; but in God, who gives all things, and desires to give himself above all things.

Boast not of thy stature, nor beauty of the body, which is spoiled and disfigured by a little sickness.

Do not take a pride in thy talents or thy wit, lest thou displease God, to whom appertaineth every natural good quality and talent which thou hast.

III. Esteem not thyself better than others, lest perhaps thou be accounted worse in the sight of God, who knows what is in man.

Be not proud of thy own works: for the judgments of God are different from the judgments of men: and oftentimes, that displeaseth him, which pleaseth men.

If thou hast any thing of good, believe better things of others, that thou mayest preserve humility.

It will do thee no harm to esteem thyself the worst of all: but it will hurt thee very much to prefer thyself before any one.

Continual peace is with the humble: but in the heart of the proud, is frequent envy and indignation.

Practical Reflections.

DEPEND only upon God, whom nothing can move, on whom alone may repose all thy cares; for nothing is weaker, more uncertain, and more inconstant than man, who is made up of error, malice, and lies. Hope all things of God, and nothing from thyself, nor from others. Do not glory in thy good works, nor ability, but in all things, and by all things, give glory to God, to whom alone glory is due.

Prayer.

As, O Jesus, though hatest and despisest those, who through a secret self-complacency, exalt themselves before thee: but lovest and honorest those who attribute nothing to themselves but evil, and refer all good to thee; impart to us, we beseech thee, that interior humility of heart which brings us nigh to thee, and makes us worthy of thy love; heal the pride and vanity of our high and haughty minds, which remove us to a distance from thee, and excite thy hatred against us; and make our hearts humble, submissive, and docile to thy holy will, that so we may bring down thy mercies upon us. Amen.

Chapter Eighth.

Of shunning too much familiarity.

I. *DISCOVER* not thy heart to every one: Eccl. viii. but treat of thy affairs with a man that is wise and feareth God.

Keep not much company with young people and strangers.

Be not a flatterer with the rich: nor willingly appear before the great.

Associate thyself with the humble and simple, with the devout and virtuous: and treat of those things which may be to edification.

Be not familiar with any woman: but commend all good women in general to God.

Desire to be familiar only with God and his angels: and fly the acquaintance of man.

We must have charity for all, but familiarity is not expedient.

It sometimes happens that a person, when not known, shines by a good reputation; who, when he is present, is disagreeable to them that see him.

We think sometimes to please others by being with them; and we begin rather to disgust them, by the evil behaviour which they discover in us.

Practical Reflections.

AVOID worldly company, useless conversations, and those overflowings and attachments of the heart, which are neither regulated, nor governed by the love of God. For all these things dissipate the soul, withdraw it from God, hinder it from being recollected and deprive it of that interior spirit, which is so necessary for salvation; they expose it to many dangers, and insensibly subvert all its interior discipline. Let your friends be persons of piety, whose lives are regular and irreproachable, that their good example may withdraw you from sin, and lead you to virtue. Happy the christian, who is attached only to Jesus Christ, to his duties, and to his salvation; who lives in God and for God, and thus commences in time that which shall be his continual occupation for eternity!

Prayer.

GRANT, O Jesus, I may love thee more than parents, relations, or friends, more than I love myself. Grant that I may earnestly endeavour to know thee, to love thee, and to follow thee, that so, having been accustomed and conformed to thee, I may not be exposed, as many christians are, to the danger of appearing, after my departure, hence, before a God whom I know not,

I have never loved; for not to love thee in time, is not to love thee for eternity; whereas, if I endeavour to love thee now, I shall have reason to hope that I shall love thee for ever. O most amiable God! O most loving God! O God—love! grant that I may love thee with my whole heart, with my whole soul, with all my strength, and with all my mind. Amen.



Chapter Ninth.

Of obedience and subjection.

I. IT is a very great thing to stand in obedience, to live under a superior, and not to be at our own disposal.

It is much more secure to be in the state of subjection; than in authority.

Many are under obedience more out of necessity, than for the love of God; and such as these are in pain, and easily repine.

Nor will they gain freedom of mind, unless they submit themselves with their whole heart for God's sake.

Run here or there, thou wilt find no rest, but in an humble subjection under the government of a superior.

The imagination and changing of places, has deceived many.

II. It is true, every one is desirous of acting according to his own liking; and is more inclined to such as are of his own mind.

But if God be amongst us, we must sometimes give up our own opinion for the sake of peace.

Who is so wise as to be able fully to know all things?

Therefore trust not too much to thine own thoughts: but be willing also to hear the sentiments of others.

Although thy opinion be good, yet if for God's sake thou leavest it, to follow that of another, it will be more profitable to thee.

III. For I have often heard, that it is more safe to hear and take counsel, than to give it.

It may also happen, that each one's thought may be good; but to refuse to yield to others, when reason or a just cause requires it, is a sign of pride and wilfulness.

Practical Reflections.

How delightful to depend solely on God in the persons of our superiors, who hold his place; and how very meritorious is the constant practice of obedience, which is a perpetual exercise of abnegation, of self-renunciation, and of the most perfect love of God! Obedience constitutes the excellence, the happiness, and the merit of a christian and religious life, and makes God the absolute master and proprietor of our hearts.

But for this, our minds, our hearts, and all our actions must combine in the practice of obedience: the mind by approving it, the heart by loving it, and our actions by exercising it promptly, generously, and constantly.

Prayer.

Is it possible, O my Saviour, to behold thee sacrifice the independence of a God to obedience, and I not love and practice it? Can I behold thee, for thirty years, punctually obedient to thy blessed mother and St. Joseph, and not endeavour faithfully to observe what thou ordainest me by thy inspirations, by my rules, and by my superiors? How can I listen to the repugnance and difficulty which I experience in obedience, when I behold thee obedient even to the very executioners, who nailed thee to the cross? Grant, O Jesus, that, in imitation of thee, I may subject myself to obedience, and thus evince my desire of pleasing thee, and of doing in all things, and at all times, thy holy will. Amen.



Chapter Tenth.

Of avoiding superfluity of words.

I. **FLY** the tumult of men as much as thou canst: for treating of worldly affairs hinders very much, although they be discoursed of with a simple intention.

For we are quickly defiled and ensnared with vanity.

I could wish I had often been silent, and that I had not been in company.

But why are we so willing to talk and discourse with one another: since we seldom return to silence without prejudice to our conscience?

The reason why we are so willing to talk, is, because by discoursing together we seek comfort from one another; and would gladly ease the heart, wearied by various thoughts.

And we very willingly talk and think of such things as we most love and desire, or which we imagine contrary to us.

II. But, alas! it is often in vain and to no purpose: for this outward consolation is no small hinderance of interior and divine comfort.

Therefore we must watch and pray, that our time may not pass away without fruit.

If it be lawful and expedient to speak, speak those things which may edify.

A bad custom and the neglect of our spiritual advancement, is a great cause of our keeping so little guard upon our mouth.

But devout conferences concerning spiritual things, help very much to spiritual progress: especially where persons of the same mind and spirit are associated together in God.

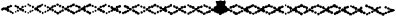
Practical Reflections.

“WATCH and pray” is the simple means which Jesus Christ prescribes, to enable a christian to resist temptation, to avoid sin and secure his salvation. To speak little to creatures and much to God, to renounce useless and curious conversations, to speak only that which is good or necessary, is an excellent method of becoming an interior man, of preserving purity of heart and peace of conscience, and of becoming entirely united to God. A soul which gives itself through the senses to creatures, and lives not an interior life, but amuses itself with trifles, is not at all in a state to relish the things of God, or to apply to prayer or recollection, which are so useful and so necessary for salvation. Why, says St. Austin, Why dost thou, O dissipated and wandering soul, seek content in created objects, in the goods and

pleasures of life? Seek within thyself, by recollection, the only true and sovereign good who is there, and who alone can satisfy thy desires.

Prayer.

GIVE me, O God, that spirit of interior recollection, which will make me attentive to thy holy inspirations and faithful to thy graces. Grant that the remembrance of thy awful presence, may remind me continually of thy blessed life and conversation, and effectually control me during my earthly pilgrimage. I am weary, O God, of living an exile from thy presence, and of being so little affected by the consideration of thy majesty, as to do nothing to please thee. What can I find in heaven or on earth that is comparable to thee? Thou art the God of my heart; grant I may be ever sensible of thy presence, and desire only the happiness of pleasing thee in time, that thou mayest be my portion for eternity. Amen.



Chapter Eleventh.

Of acquiring peace and zeal of spiritual progress.

I. WE might have much peace, if we would not busy ourselves with the sayings and doings of others, and with things which belong not to us.

How can he remain long in peace, who entangles himself with other people's cares; who seeks occasions abroad, and who is little or seldom inwardly recollected?

Blessed are the single hearted, for they shall enjoy much peace.

II. What was the reason why some of the saints were so perfect and contemplative?

Because they made it their study wholly to mortify in themselves all earthly desires: and thus they were enabled, with the whole interior of their heart, to cleave to God, and freely to attend to themselves.

We are too much taken up with our own passions; and too solicitous about transitory things.

And seldom do we perfectly overcome so much as one vice, nor are we earnestly bent upon our daily progress; and therefore we remain cold and tepid.

III. If we were perfectly dead to ourselves,

and no ways entangled in our interior: then might we be able to relish things divine, and experience something of heavenly contemplation.

The whole and greatest hinderance is, because we are not free from passions and lusts; nor do we strive to walk in the perfect way of the saints.

And when we meet with any small adversity, we are too quickly dejected, and turn away to seek after human consolation.

IV. If we strove like valiant men to stand in the battle; doubtless we should see that our Lord would help us from heaven.

For he is ready to help them that fight and trust in his grace; who furnishes us with occasions of fighting that we may overcome.

If we place our progress in religion in these outward observances only, our devotion will quickly be at an end.

But let us lay the axe to the root, that being purged from passions, we may possess a quiet mind.

V. If every year we rooted out one vice, we should soon become perfect men.

But now we often find it quite otherwise: that we were better and more pure in the beginning of our conversion, than after many years of our profession.

Our fervour and progress ought to be every day greater: but now it is esteemed a great matter if a man can retain some part of his first fervour.

If we would use but a little violence upon ourselves in the beginning, we might afterwards do all things with ease and joy.

It is hard to leave off our old customs: and harder to go against our own will.

But if thou dost not overcome things that are small and light: when wilt thou overcome greater difficulties?

Resist thy inclination in the beginning, and break off the evil habit: lest perhaps by little and little the difficulty increase upon thee.

O! if thou wert sensible how much peace thou shouldst procure to thyself, and joy to others, by behaving thyself well; thou wouldst be more solicitous for thy spiritual progress.

Practical Reflections.

As nothing is more opposite to true peace, to the happiness and comfort of this life, and to an assured hope of salvation hereafter, than to abandon ourselves to our passions, and submit to be their slaves and victims, so, nothing is more capable of establishing within us true repose of conscience, and of obtaining merit and happiness in this life, and eternal salvation in the next, than ever to resist and conquer our evil inclinations, and to refuse our hearts, on all occasions, the gratification of their irregular desires. Endeav-

vour, therefore, seriously to die to thyself, to overcome thy repugnance to good, to subdue the ardour of thy desires, and to renounce thy own will in all things, for this alone will make thee happy in time and eternity. There is no true peace of conscience, nor hope of future reward, but in doing all for God, and in opposition to thyself.

Prayer.

How happy should I be, my Saviour, how content and how sure of salvation, did I but strive as much to satisfy thy justice by penance, and thy love by fidelity, as I do to satisfy my passions and the demands of self-love! Suffer me not, O Lord, to serve any other master but thee. Break my chains asunder, deliver me from the unjust and cruel servitude of my passions. My heart is made for thee. Permit not vanity, self-love, sensuality, idleness, or anger, like strange gods, to divide it, or rather rob it of the empire of thy love. Not to give thee my whole heart, is to withdraw it from thee, who wilt have all or none. O my God and my all! O God of my heart! be thou my portion for ever. Amen.



Chapter Twelfth.

Of the advantage of adversity.

I. IT is good for us to have sometimes troubles and adversities; for they make a man enter into himself, that he may know that he is in a state of banishment, and may not place his hopes in any thing of this world.

It is good that we sometimes suffer contradictions, and that men have an evil or imperfect opinion of us; even when we do and intend well.

These things are often helps to humility, and defend us from vain glory.

For then we better run to God our inward witness, when outwardly we are despised by men, and little credit is given to us.

II. Therefore should a man establish himself in such manner in God, as to have no need of seeking many comforts from men.

When a *man of good will* is troubled or tempted, or afflicted with evil thoughts; then he better understands what need he hath of God, without whom he finds he can do no good.

Then also he laments; he sighs, and prays by reason of the miseries which he suffers.

Then he is weary of living longer; and

B

34 THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST.

wishes death to come that he may be *dissolved and be with Christ*.

Then also he well perceives that perfect security and full peace cannot be found in this world.

Practical Reflections.

WE should regard contradictions as the trials by which God would prove and purify our charity. If all persons had the consideration and regard for us which our self-love desires, and which it often induces us to believe we deserve, we should entertain only a natural regard for our neighbour, subject to the caprices of humor, a species of gratitude purely human, and a secret complacency in ourselves. But God would have us every where meet with, and suffer contradictions, disappointments, and opposition to our designs, from those with whom we live, that so, we may love them, solely for his sake, and because he so ordains. Happy the soul, which tribulation tries, and temptation purifies, as gold is tried and purified in the fire! It thus becomes worthy of acceptance with God, for it is after God's own heart.

Prayer.

SUPPORT me, O Lord, under all the troubles and contradictions which thou ordainest me to suffer: that they may not weaken my charity for my neighbour, nor my fidelity towards thee. Grant that temptations, far from separating me from thee, may unite me more closely to thee, by obliging me to experience a continual and pressing need of thy powerful assistance. Amen.



Chapter Thirteenth.

Of resisting temptation.

I. AS long as we live in this world we cannot be without tribulation and temptation.

Hence it is written in Job: *Man's life upon earth is a temptation.*

Therefore ought every one to be solicitous about his temptations, and to watch in prayers; lest the devil, (who never sleeps, but goes about seeking whom he may devour,) find room to deceive him.

No man is so perfect and holy as not to have sometimes temptations: and we cannot be wholly without them.

II. Temptations are often very profitable to a man, although they be troublesome and grievous: for in them a man is humbled, purified, and instructed.

All the saints have passed through many tribulations and temptations, and have profited by them: and they who could not support temptations, have become reprobates, and fell off.

There is not any order so holy, nor place so retired, where there are not temptations and adversities.

III. A man is never entirely secure from temptations as long as he lives: because we have within us the source of temptations, having been born in concupiscence.

When one temptation or tribulation is over, another comes on: and we shall have always something to suffer, because we have lost the good of our original happiness.

Many seek to fly temptations, and fall more grievously into them.

By flight alone we cannot overcome; but by patience and true humility we are made stronger than all our enemies.

IV. He who only declines them outwardly, and does not pluck out the root, will profit little: nay, temptations will sooner return to him, and he will find himself in a worse condition.

By degrees, and by patience, with longanimity, thou shalt, by God's grace, better

overcome them, than by harshness and thine own importunity.

In temptation, often take counsel, and deal not roughly with one that is tempted: but comfort him, as thou wouldst wish to be done to thyself.

V. Inconstancy of mind, and small confidence in God, is the beginning of all temptations.

For as a ship without a rudder is tossed to and fro by the waves: so the man who is remiss, and who quits his resolution, is many ways tempted.

Fire tries iron, and temptation tries a just man.

We often know not what we can do: but temptation discovers what we are.

VI. However, we must be watchful, especially in the beginning of temptation: because then the enemy is easier overcome, when he is not suffered to come in at the door of the soul, but is kept out and resisted at his first nock.

Whence a certain man said: *Withstand the beginning, after-remedies come too late.*

For first a bare thought comes to the mind: then a strong imagination: afterwards delight, and evil motion and consent.

And thus, by little and little, the wicked enemy gets full entrance, when he is not resisted in the beginning.

And how much the longer a man is negligent in resisting; so much the weaker does he daily become in himself, and the enemy becomes stronger against him.

VII. Some suffer great temptations in the beginning of their conversion, and some in the end.

And some there are who are much troubled in a manner all their life time.

Some are but lightly tempted, according to the wisdom and equity of the ordinance of God, who weighs the state and merits of men, and pre-ordains all for the salvation of his elect.

VIII. We must not therefore despair when we are tempted, but pray to God with so much the more fervour, that he may vouchsafe to help us in all tribulations: who, no doubt, according to the saying of St. Paul, *will make such issue with the temptation, that we may be able to sustain it.* 1 Cor. x.

Let us therefore humble our souls, under the hand of God in all temptations and tribulations: for the humble in spirit he will save and exalt.

IX. In temptations and tribulations a man is proved what progress he has made: and in them there is greater merit, and his virtue appears more conspicuous.

Nor is it much if a man be devout and fervent when he feels no trouble; but if in the

time of adversity he bears up with patience, there will be hope of a great advancement.

Some are preserved from great temptations, and are often overcome in daily little ones: that being humbled, they may never presume of themselves in great things, who are weak in such small occurrences.

Practical Reflections.

TEMPTATIONS serve to free us from all lurking inclinations to vanity, or self-love, and from at all depending upon ourselves; because they make us feel the weight of our own miseries, give us a disgust for all earthly gratifications, and oblige us to rely solely upon God. They serve also to humble us, by the experience they afford us, of our own weakness, and of the depth of our natural corruption. They serve, in a word, to convince us of our inability to do the least good, or to avoid the smallest sin, without the assistance of God.

Prayer.

I am sensible, O Jesus, that in the time of temptation, of myself, I cannot but offend thee, and that, carried along by my natural inclination for evil, I am in danger of falling into sin. But I know, also, that thou canst, and thy apostle assures me thou wilt de-

fend me against the most violent assaults of my passions. Wherefore, mistrusting myself, and relying upon thee, I will exclaim, "*Lord save me, or I perish.*" I will stretch out my hand to thee as St. Peter did, and confidently hope thou wilt support me from perishing. Amen.



Chapter Fourteenth.

Of avoiding rash judgment.

I. TURN thy eyes back upon thyself, and see thou judge not the doings of others.

In judging others a man labours in vain, often errs, and easily sins: but in judging and looking into himself, he always labours with fruit.

We frequently judge of a thing according as we have it at heart: for we easily lose true judgment through private affection.

If God were always the only object of our desire, we should not so easily be disturbed at the resistance of our opinions.

II. But there is often something lies hid within, or occurs from without which draws us along with it.

Many secretly seek themselves in what they do, and are not sensible of it.

They seem also to continue in good peace,

when things are done according to their will and judgment: but if it fall out contrary to their desires, they are soon moved and become sad.

Difference of thoughts and opinions is too frequently the source of dissensions amongst friends and neighbours, amongst religious and devout persons.

III. An old custom is with difficulty relinquished: and no man is led willingly further than himself sees or likes.

If thou reliest more upon thine own reason or industry than upon the virtue that subjects to Jesus Christ, thou wilt seldom and hardly be an *enlightened* man: for God will have us perfectly subject to himself, and to transcend all reason by inflamed love.

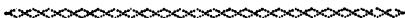
Practical Reflections.

WE are frequently biased in our judgments, more by the inclinations of the heart, than by the light of the understanding. Through self-love we ordinarily approve in ourselves, what in others we frequently condemn; and are as much alive to the defects of our neighbour, as we are blind to our own. A soul recollected in the presence of God, and faithful to the motions of his grace, being thus engaged with God, and united to him, is solely occupied with God in itself, and itself in God; and, endeavouring to keep

a strict guard over its own heart, it forgives nothing in itself, and every thing in others.

Prayer.

O MY God! when shall I be so free from all attachment to creatures, and from all self-seeking, as to keep my mind and my heart solely upon thee, attentive to my duties, and to securing my salvation. Grant, O Jesus, I may forget, or be wholly ignorant of every thing which I ought not to know, or observe; and thus live only for thee, with thee, and in thee. Vanities, pleasures, news, amusements, and curiosities, how little, or rather how really nothing are ye, to a soul, for whom its God is its all! Suffer me not, O my Saviour, to seek, to know, to love, or to possess anything but thee, who art more to me than all things else. In flame my heart with an ardent desire of pleasing thee, and an humble acquiescence in all things to thy good pleasure. Amen.



Chapter Fifteenth.

Of works done out of charity.

I. **EVIL** ought not to be done, either for any thing in the world, or for the love of any

man : but for the profit of one that stands in need, a good work is sometimes freely to be omitted, or rather to be changed for a better.

For, by doing thus, a good work is not lost, but is changed into a better.

Without charity, the outward work profiteth nothing: but whatever is done out of charity, be it never so little and contemptible, all becomes fruitful.

For God regards more with how much affection and love a person performs a work, than how much he does

II. He does much, who loves much.

He does much that does well what he does.

He does well who regards rather the common good than his own will.

That seems often to be charity which is rather natural affection: because our own natural inclination, self-will, hope of retribution, desire of our own interest, will seldom be wanting.

III. He that has true and perfect charity seeks himself in no one thing: but desires only the glory of God in all things.

He envies no man, because he loves no private joy; nor does he desire to rejoice in himself: but above all good things, he wishes to be made happy in God.

He attributes nothing of good in any man, but refers it totally to God, from whom all things proceed as from their fountain, in the enjoyment of whom all the saints repose as in their last end.

Ah! if a man had but one spark of perfect charity, he would doubtless perceive that all earthly things are full of vanity.

Practical Reflections.

WE cannot dwell too much upon these words of the author, "God regards more with how much love and affection a person performs a work, than how much he does; and he does much who loves much;" that is, our actions are really pleasing to God, only in proportion as they are influenced by a desire of pleasing him, and as it were impressed with the seal of his love. Whatsoever you do, says St. Paul, do all for the honor and glory of God. It is a lively, active, and often renewed love, which constitutes the merit of our good actions; faith itself becomes weak and languishing, if not animated by charity, and by a pious and affectionate tendency towards the author of those truths which it unfolds to us.

Let us therefore, endeavour to love God in all we do, and to do all for the love of him. All for thee, O Jesus, all with thee, all in thee. Behold, my soul, what thou shouldst say and do incessantly, in order to lead a supernatural and meritorious life, and to commence in time what thou hopest to continue throughout eternity.

Prayer.

How wearied am I, O my God, with being so often forgetful of thy presence, and devoid of thy love ! What confusion for me to think so little of a God, whose thoughts are always upon me, and to be so frequently indifferent about thee, my Jesus, who art ever burning with the love of me ! Suffer me not to live one moment without loving thee ; and as thou art the centre of my heart, inflame me with such a continual affection for thee, such a lively and ardent desire of pleasing thee, and of seeking thee, in and before all things, that I may find no repose, nor true happiness, but in thee. Amen.



Chapter Sixteenth.

Of bearing the defects of others.

I. **WHAT** a man cannot amend in himself or others, he must bear with patience, till God ordains otherwise.

Think, that perhaps it is better so for thy trial and patience : without which our merits are little worth.

Thou must, nevertheless, under such impressions, earnestly pray that God may

vouchsafe to help thee, and that thou mayest bear them well.

II. If any one, being once or twice admonished, does not comply, contend not with him: but commit all to God, that his will may be done, and he may be honoured in all his servants, who knows how to convert evil into good.

Endeavour to be patient in supporting others defects and infirmities of what kind soever: because thou also hast many things which others must bear withal.

If thou canst not make thyself such a one as thou wouldst: how canst thou expect to have another according to thy liking?

We would willingly have others perfect: and yet we mend not our own defects.

III. We would have others strictly corrected: but are not willing to be corrected ourselves.

The large liberty of others displeases us: and yet we would not be denied any thing we ask for.

We are willing that others should be bound up by laws: and we suffer not ourselves by any means to be restrained.

Thus it is evident how seldom we weigh our neighbour in the same balance with ourselves.

If all were perfect: what then should we have to suffer from others for God's sake?

IV. But now God has so disposed things,

that we may learn to bear one another's burdens: for there is no man without defect; no man without his burden; no man sufficient for himself; no man wise enough for himself; but we must support one another, comfort one another, assist, instruct, and admonish one another.

But how great each one's virtue is, best appears by occasion of adversity: for occasions do not make a man frail, but shew what he is.

Practical Reflections.

How excellent a means of sanctifying us, and of fitting us for heaven, is the exercise of that charity, by which we support in ourselves, and in others, those weaknesses which we cannot correct! for nothing can humble and confound us before God more, than a sense of our own miseries; and nothing can be more just, than that we should bear in others, those things which we would have them support in ourselves. We should, therefore, bear with the tempers of others, and endeavour to give no cause of uneasiness to any one, on account of our own. It is thus, according to St. Paul, we shall carry one another's burdens, and fulfil the law of Jesus Christ, which is a law of charity, meekness, and patience.

Prayer.

How true it is, O Lord, that contradictions are most advantageous to a christian who endeavours to support them with patience and resignation! for they prove and purify his virtue, and bring it to perfection! But thou knowest what difficulty we experience in supporting these trials, and how sensible we are to every thing that opposes our desires. Permit us not, O God, to yield to our feelings; but grant we may sacrifice them for the happiness of pleasing thee; since to feel much, and not to follow the bent of our feelings, to keep silence when the heart is moved, and to withhold ourselves when we are all but overcome, is the most essential practice, and the surest mark of that truly christian virtue, which is to gain for us eternal happiness. This, O Jesus, we hope to obtain from thy infinite bounty. Amen.

**Chapter Seventeenth.**

Of a monastic life.

I. THOU must learn to renounce thy own will in many things, if thou wilt keep peace and concord with others.

It is no small matter to live in a monastery, or in a congregation, and to converse therein without reproof, and to persevere faithful till death.

Blessed is he who has there lived well, and made a happy end.

If thou wilt stand as thou oughtest, and make a due progress, look upon thyself as a banished man, and a stranger upon earth.

Thou must be content to be made a fool for Christ, if thou wilt lead a religious life.

II. The habit and the tonsure contribute little ; but a change of manners, and an entire mortification of the passions, make a true religious man.

He that seeks here any other thing than purely God and the salvation of his soul, will find nothing but trouble and sorrow.

Neither can he long remain in peace, who does not strive to be the least, and subject to all.

III. Thou camest hither to serve, not to govern : know that thou art called to suffer and to labour, not to be idle and talkative.

Here then men are tried as Gold in the furnace.

Here no man can stand, unless he be willing with all his heart to humble himself for the love of God.

Practical Reflections.

IN order to live happily and contented in a community, or religious house, and to labour effectually for the attainment of perfection and salvation, we must endure much, and restrain and conquer ourselves upon many occasions. As the dispositions of those with whom we live are often contrary to our own, grace must preserve peace and charity, by enabling us to suffer and to bear with a contrariety of tempers, as nature preserves the order of the universe, by reconciling a contrariety of elements. We shall never find true repose of conscience, nor acquire an assured hope of salvation, but by the practice of interior mortification, and true humility of heart, by which we bear all things, and refuse the soul its desires.

Prayer.

As thou hast commanded me, O Jesus, to seek peace, and to keep it with all men, and as I cannot enjoy this advantage but by humbly bearing with others, and by giving them no cause of uneasiness on my own account, command in this respect what thou pleasest, and give me what thou commandest; for how can I bring the pride and haughtiness of my mind to bear, and to accept

willingly, the repulses, contempt, and humiliations, which so frequently befall me, if thou assist me not, O Lord, with the all-powerful aid of thy grace? And how shall I stifle the feelings and sallies of my heart, under contradictions, if thou arrest them not? Grant therefore, O God, that on occasion of repulses or contradictions, influenced by the respect which is due to thy holy presence, and by the submission which I ought to tender to thy blessed will, I may calm all trouble within me, and bring all to give place to thy love. Amen.



Chapter Eighteenth.

Of the example of the holy fathers.

I. LOOK upon the lively examples of the holy fathers, in whom true perfection and religion was most shining, and thou wilt see how little, and almost nothing, that is which we do.

Alas! what is our life if compared to theirs.

The saints and friends of Christ served the Lord in hunger and thirst; in cold and nakedness; in labour and weariness; in watchings and fastings; in prayers and holy meditations; in persecutions and many reproaches.

Ah! how many and how grievous tribulations have the apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and all the rest, gone through, who have been willing to follow Christ's footsteps: for they hated their lives in this world, that they might possess them for eternity.

Oh! how strict and mortified a life did the holy fathers lead in the desert! How long and grievous temptations did they endure! how often were they molested by the enemy! What frequent and fervent prayers did they offer to God! What rigorous abstinence did they go through! What great zeal and fervour had they for their spiritual progress! How strong a war did they wage for overcoming vice! How pure and upright was their intention to God!

They laboured all the day, and in the nights, they gave themselves to long prayers: though even whilst they were at work, they ceased not from mental prayer.

III. They spent all their time profitably: every hour seemed short which they spent with God: and through the great sweetness of divine contemplation, they forgot even the necessity of their bodily refreshment.

They renounced all riches, dignities, honours, friends, and kindred: they desired to have nothing of this world; they scarce allowed themselves the necessaries of life: the serving the body even in necessity, was irksome to them.

They were poor therefore as to earthly things: but very rich in grace and virtues.

Outwardly they wanted, but inwardly they were refreshed with divine graces and consolations.

IV. They were strangers to the world: but near and familiar friends to God.

They seemed to themselves as nothing, and were despised by this world: but in the eyes of God they were very valuable and beloved.

They stood in true humility, they lived in simple obedience, they walked in charity and patience: and therefore they daily advanced in spirit, and obtained great favour with God.

They were given as an example for all religious: and ought more to excite us to make good progress, than the number of the lukewarm to grow slack.

V. O! how great was the fervour of all religious, in the beginning of their holy institution.

O! how great was their devotion in prayer! how great their zeal for virtue!

How great discipline was in force amongst them! How great reverence and obedience in all, flourished under the rule of a superior!

The footsteps remaining, still bear witness that they were truly perfect and holy men: who waging war so stoutly, trod the world under their feet.

Now he is thought great who is not a transgressor: and who can with patience endure what he hath undertaken.

Ah! the lukewarmness and negligence of our state, that we so quickly fall away from our former fervour, and are now even weary of living through sloth and tepidity!

Would to God that advancement in virtues were not wholly asleep in thee, who hast often seen many examples of the devout!

Practical Reflections.

NOTHING can so powerfully excite us to live holily as the example of those who are holy. Example convinces us of the possibility of virtue, makes it practicable and easy, and offers it to us already illustrated in others, and, as it were, prepared for our exercise. For, when we read the lives, or witness the examples of the saints, we naturally say to ourselves: See what men like ourselves have done, and suffered, and forsaken, for the kingdom of heaven, which is equally the object of our hopes. But what have we done to obtain it? Why do we not exert ourselves as they did to become worthy of the same recompense? Alas! I have reason to apprehend that when I shall appear before God, he will compare my life with my faith, with my religion, and the example of holy men who have lived in the same state of life

as myself, and confronting me with these witnesses, will say to me: see what thou shouldst have done, and how thou hast neglected it; judge thyself; what dost thou deserve?

Prayer.

ENTER not, O Lord, into judgment with thy servant; for my life, when compared with the conduct of the saints, can never justify me. Grant me the grace, which thou, my Saviour, didst merit for me, of attending to the discharge of my duties, of entering into the spirit of religion, of observing its rules and maxims, and of conforming my life to my faith, that so, when I appear before thee, I may be clothed in the robes of thy justice, supported by thy mercy, and animated with thy love. Amen.



Chapter Nineteenth.

Of the exercises of a good religious man.

I. THE life of a good religious man ought to be eminent in all virtues: that he may be such interiorly, as he appears to men in his exterior.

And with good reason ought he to be much more in his interior, than he exteriorly appears; because he who beholds us is God, of whom we ought exceedingly to stand in awe, wherever we are, and like angels walk pure in his sight.

We ought every day to renew our resolution, and excite ourselves to fervour, as if it were the first day of our conversion, and to say :

Help me, O Lord God, in my good resolution, and in thy holy service, and give me grace now this day perfectly to begin; for what I have hitherto done is nothing.

II. According as our resolution is, will the progress of our advancement be: and he had need of much diligence who would advance much.

Now if he that makes a strong resolution often fails: what will he do who seldom or but weakly resolves?

The falling off from our resolutions happens divers ways: and a small omission in our exercises seldom passeth without some loss.

The resolutions of the just depend on the grace of God, rather than on their own wisdom: and in whom they always put their trust, whatever they take in hand.

For man proposes, but God disposes: nor is the way of man in his own hands.

III. If for piety's sake, or with a design

to the profit of our brother, we sometimes omit our accustomed exercises, it may afterwards be easily recovered.

But if through a loathing of mind, or negligence, it be lightly let alone, it is no small fault, and will prove hurtful.

Let us endeavour what we can, we shall still be apt to fail in many things.

But yet we must always resolve on something certain, and in particular against those things which hinder us most.

We must examine and order well both our exterior and interior: because both conduce to our advancement.

IV. If thou canst not continually recollect thyself, do it sometimes, and at least once a day, that is at morning or evening.

In the morning resolve, in the evening examine thy performances: how thou hast behaved this day in word, work or thought: because in these perhaps thou hast often offended God and thy neighbour.

Prepare thyself like a man, to resist the wicked attacks of the devil: bridle gluttony, and thou shalt the easier restrain all carnal inclinations.

Be never altogether idle: but either reading, or writing, or praying, or meditating, or labouring in something that may be for the common good.

Yet in bodily exercises, a discretion is to be used: nor are they equally to be undertaken by all.

V. Those things which are not *common* are not to be done in public: for *particular* things are more safely done in private.

But take care thou be not slack in common exercises, and more forward in things of thy own particular devotion: but having fully and faithfully performed what thou art bound to, and what is enjoined thee, if thou hast any time remaining, give thyself to thyself according as thy devotion shall incline thee.

All cannot have the self same exercise: but this is more proper for one, and that for another.

Moreover, according to the diversity of times, divers exercises are more pleasing: for some relish better on festival days, others on common days.

We stand in need of one kind in time of temptation, and of another in time of peace and rest.

Some we willingly think on when we are sad, others when we are joyful in the Lord.

VI. About the time of the principal festivals, we must renew our good exercises: and more fervently implore the prayers of the saints.

We ought to make our resolution from festival to festival: as if we were then to depart out of this world, and to come to the everlasting festival.

Therefore we ought carefully to prepare

ourselves at times of devotion : and to converse more devoutly, and keep all observances more strictly, as being shortly to receive the reward of our labours from God.

VII. And if it be deferred, let us believe that we are not well prepared, and that we are as yet unworthy of the great glory which shall be revealed in us at the appointed time: and let us endeavour to prepare ourselves better for our departure.

Blessed is that servant, says the evangelist St. Luke, whom when his Lord shall come, he shall find watching. Amen, I say to you, he shall set him over all his possessions. Luke xiii.

Practical Reflections.

To engage us to die to ourselves, and to live to God and for God, how efficacious are lively desires, when constantly directed to that object! for we ever accomplish what we earnestly desire; but our misfortune is, that oftentimes our desires of pleasing God are weak and feeble, while the desires of gratifying ourselves are strong and active. Hence proceeds the inefficacy of our good purposes, which is a great obstacle to perfection and salvation. We wish to give ourselves to God, and we wish it not; we desire to do so in time of prayer, and the holy communion, and at other times we desire it not. We, in

part, and for a time only, would acquit ourselves of our duties; hence our lives become a succession of good desires and evil effects, of promises and infidelities. Is this to labor effectually for salvation?

Prayer.

WEARY, O Lord, of the inefficacy of our desires, and of offering thee only thoughts which we practice not, and promises which we never fulfil, we earnestly supplicate thee to grant us the grace of adding effect to our desires, and of uniting the practice with the knowledge of virtue: for we well know, what thou teachest in the gospel, that not every one who says "Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of thy Father; grant, therefore, O my Saviour, that I may not only think of and desire, but ever accomplish thy blessed will. Amen.



Chapter Twentieth.

Of the love of solitude and silence.

L. SEEK a proper time to retire into thyself, and often think of the benefits of God.
Let curiosities alone.

Read such matters as may rather move thee to compunction, than give thee occupation.

If thou wilt withdraw thyself from superfluous talk and idle visits, as also from giving ear to news and reports, thou wilt find time sufficient and proper to employ thyself in good meditations.

The greatest saints avoided the company of men as much as they could, and chose to live to God in secret.

II. *As often as I have been amongst men, said one, I have returned less a man*: this we often experience when we talk long.

It is easier to be altogether silent, than not to exceed in words.

It is easier to keep retired at home, than to be able to be sufficiently upon one's guard abroad.

Whosoever, therefore, aims at arriving at *internal* and *spiritual* things, must, with Jesus, go aside from the crowd.

No man is secure in appearing abroad, but he who would willingly lie hid at home.

No man securely speaks, but he who loves to hold his peace.

No man securely governs, but he who would willingly live in subjection.

No man securely commands, but he who has learned well to obey.

III. No man securely rejoiceth, unless he have within him the testimony of a good conscience.

Yet the security of the saints was always full of the fear of God.

Neither were they less careful or humble in themselves, because they were shining with great virtues and grace.

But the security of the wicked arises from pride and presumption: and will end in deceiving themselves.

Never promise thyself security in this life, though thou seemest to be a good religious man, or a devout hermit.

IV. Oftentimes they that were better in the judgment of men, have been in greater danger by reason of their too great confidence.

So that it is better for many not to be altogether free from temptations, but to be often assaulted: that they may not be too secure: lest, perhaps, they be lifted up with pride, or take more liberty to go aside after exterior comforts.

Oh! how good a conscience would that man preserve, who would never seek after transitory joy, nor ever busy himself with the world.

Oh! how great peace and tranquillity would he possess, who would cut off all vain solitude, and only think of the things of God, and his salvation, and place his whole hope in God.

V. No man is worthy of heavenly comfort who has not dilligently exercised himself in holy compunction.

If thou wouldst find compunction in thy heart, retire into thy chamber, and shut out the tumults of the world, as it is written: *Have compunction in your chambers.* Ps. iv.

Thou shalt find in thy cell what thou shalt often lose abroad.

Thy cell, if thou continue in it, grows sweet: but if thou keep not to it, it becomes tedious and distasteful.

If in the beginning of thy conversion thou accustom thyself to remain in thy cell and keep it well: it will be to thee afterwards a dear friend, and a most agreeable delight.

VI. In silence and quiet the devout soul goes forward, and learns the secrets of the scriptures.

There she finds floods of tears, with which she may wash and cleanse herself every night: that she may become so much the more familiar with her Maker, by how much the father she lives from all worldly tumult.

For God with his holy angels will draw nigh to him, who withdraws himself from his acquaintance and friends.

It is better to lie hid, and take care of one's self, than neglecting one's self to work even miracles.

It is commendable for a religious man, to go seldom abroad, to fly being seen, and not to desire to see men.

VII. Why wilt thou see what thou must not have? *The world passeth and its concupiscence.* 1 John ii.

The desires of sensuality draw thee abroad: but when the hour is past, what dost thou bring home, but a weight upon thy conscience, and a dissipation of heart.

A joyful going abroad often brings forth a sorrowful coming home: and a merry evening makes a sad morning.

So all carnal joy enters pleasantly: but in the end brings remorse and death.

What canst thou see elsewhere which thou seest not here? Behold the heavens and the earth, and all the elements; for of these are all things made.

. VIII. What canst thou see any where which can continue long under the sun?

Thou thinkest perhaps to be satisfied, but thou canst not attain to it.

If thou couldst see all things at once before thee, what would it be but a vain sight?

Lift up thine eyes to God on high, and pray for thy sins and negligences.

Leave vain things to vain people: but mind thou the things which God has commanded thee.

Shut thy door upon thee, and call to thee Jesus thy beloved.

Stay with him in thy cell, for thou shalt not find so great peace any where else.

If thou hadst not gone abroad, and hearkened to rumours, thou hadst kept thyself better in good peace: but since thou art delighted sometimes to hear news, thou must from thence suffer a disturbance of heart.



Chapter Twenty-first.

Of compunction of heart.

I. If thou wilt make any progress, keep thyself in the fear of God, and be not too free, but restrain all thy senses under discipline, and give not thyself up to foolish mirth.

Give thyself to compunction of heart, and thou shalt find devotion.

Compunction opens the way to much good, which dissolution is wont quickly to lose.

It is wonderful that any man can heartily rejoice in this life, who weighs and considers his banishment, and the many dangers of his soul.

II. Through levity of heart, and the little thought we have of our defects, we feel not the sorrows of our soul: but often vainly laugh, when in all reason we ought to weep.

There is no true liberty, nor good joy, but in the fear of God with a good conscience.

Happy is he who can cast away all impediments of distractions, and recollect himself to the union of holy communion.

Happy is he who separates himself from all that may burthen or defile his conscience.

Strive manfully: custom is overcome by custom.

C

If thou canst let men alone, they will let thee do what thou hast to do.

III. Busy not thyself with other men's affairs, nor entangle thyself with the causes of great ones.

Have always an eye upon thyself in the first place : and take special care to admonish thyself preferably to all thy dearest friends.

If thou hast not the favour of men, be not grieved thereat : but let thy concern be, that thou dost not carry thyself so well and so circumspectly as it becomes a servant of God, and a devout religious man to demean himself.

It is oftentimes more profitable and more secure for a man not to have many comforts in this life ; especially according to the flesh.

Yet, that we have not divine comforts, or seldomer experience them, is our own faults : because we do not seek compunction of heart, nor cast off altogether vain and outward satisfactions.

IV. Acknowledge thyself unworthy of divine consolation, and rather worthy of much tribulation.

When a man has perfect compunction, then the whole world is to him burdensome and distasteful.

A good man always finds subject enough for mourning and weeping.

For whether he considers himself, or thinks

of his neighbour, he knows that no man lives here without tribulation : and the more thoroughly he considers himself, the more he grieves.

The subjects for just grief and interior compunction are our vices and sins, in which we lie entangled in such manner, as seldom to be able to contemplate heavenly things.

V. If thou wouldst oftener think of thy death, than of a long life, no doubt but thou wouldst more fervently amend thyself

And if thou didst seriously consider in thy heart the future punishments of hell or purgatory: I believe thou wouldst willingly endure labour and pain, and fear no kind of austerity.

But because these things reach not the heart, and we still love the things which flatter us, therefore we remain cold and very sluggish.

VI. It is oftentimes a want of *spirit*, which makes the wretched body so easily complain.

Pray therefore humbly to our Lord, that he may give thee the spirit of compunction ; and say with the prophet: *Feed me, O Lord, with the food of tears, and give me drink of tears in measure.* Ps. xxix.

Practical Reflections.

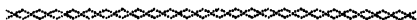
CAN we be sensible of our miseries, and not deplore them, and humble ourselves un-

der them before God, and have continual recourse to him to support and keep us from offending him? It is this humble diffidence in ourselves, and firm confidence in God, which constitute the spirit of compunction, of which the author speaks in this Chapter. How is it possible we should taste true joy for one moment, in this life, in which we are beset with miseries, and sin,—are continually in danger of being lost for ever, and are exiles from Paradise, our true country, Well might St. Augustin say, that a true christian suffereth life and sigheth after death, which will put an end to sin and unite him for ever to his God. How afflicting, to feel ever prone to offend God,—always in danger of forfeiting salvation! O life, how burthensome art thou to a soul that truly loves God, and is grieved at being separated at a distance from him,—an exile from heaven! O death, how sweet art thou to a soul that breathes only God, and can no longer exist without possessing him!

Prayer.

GRANT, O God, that my heart may become detached from all things, and, being wholly recollected in thee, relish no other pleasure but that of loving thee, of acting and suffering for thy sake. I willingly consent to the sweet portion thou allottest me,

to do thy holy will, in time, by patiently receiving all the pains thou sendest me, that thou mayest become my happiness for eternity. What should I not do and suffer for such a reward? Keep me, O Lord, in the holy desire with which thou now inspirest me, of sparing no pains to obtain it. Amen.



Chapter Twenty-second.

Of the consideration of the misery of man.

I. THOU art miserable wherever thou art, and which way soever thou turnest thyself, unless thou turn thyself to God.

Why art thou troubled because things do not succeed with thee according to thy will and desire?

Who is there that has all things according to his will?

Neither I, nor thou, nor any man upon earth.

There is no man in the world without some trouble or affliction, though he be a king or a pope.

Who is there that is most at ease? doubtless he who is willing to suffer something for God's sake.

II. Many unstable and weak men are apt to say: behold how well such a one lives,

how rich, how great, how mighty and powerful!

But attend to heavenly goods, and thou wilt see that all these temporal things are nothing, but very uncertain, and rather burdensome: because they are never possessed without care and fear.

The happiness of a man consisteth not in having temporal things in abundance, but a moderate competency sufficeth.

It is truly a misery to live upon earth.

The more a man desireth to be spiritual, the more this present life becomes distasteful to him: because he the better understands, and more clearly sees the defects of human corruption.

For to eat, drink, watch, sleep, rest, labour, and to be subject to other necessities of nature, is truly a great misery and affliction to a devout man, who desires to be released, and free from all sin.

III. For the *inward* man is very much burdened with the necessities of the body in this world.

And therefore the prophet devoutly prays to be freed from them, saying: *From my necessities deliver me, O Lord.* Ps. xxiv.

But woe to them that know not their own misery, and more woe to them that love this miserable and corruptible life.

For some there are who love it to that degree, although they can scarce get necessa-

ries by labouring or begging, that if they could live always here, they would not care at all for the kingdom of God.

IV. O senseless people, and infidels in heart, who lie buried so deep in earthly things, as to relish nothing but the things of the flesh!

Miserable wretches! they will in the end find to their cost, how vile a nothing that was which they so much loved.

But the saints of God, and all the devout friends of Christ, made no account of what pleased the flesh, or flourished in this life; but their whole hope and intentions aspired to eternal goods.

Their whole desire tended upwards, to things everlasting and invisible: for fear lest the love of visible things should draw them down to things below.

Lose not, brother, thy confidence of going forward to spiritual things: there is yet time, the hour is not yet past.

V. Why wilt thou put off thy resolution from day to day? Arise, and begin this very moment, and say: Now is the time for doing, and now is the time to fight: now is the proper time to amend my life.

When thou art troubled and afflicted, then is the time to merit.

Thou must pass through fire and water, before thou comest to refreshment.

Unless thou do violence to thyself, thou wilt not overcome vice.

As long as we carry about us this frail body, we cannot be without sin, nor live without uneasiness and sorrow.

We would fain be at rest from all misery : but because we have lost innocence by sin, we have also lost true happiness.

We must therefore have patience, and wait for the mercy of God, till iniquity pass away, and this mortality be swallowed up by immortal life.

VI. O! how great is human frailty, which always prone to vice!

To day thou confessest thy sins, and tomorrow thou again committest what thou hast confessed.

Now thou resolvest to take care, and an hour after thou dost as if thou hadst never resolved.

We have reason therefore to humble ourselves, and never to think much of ourselves. since we are so frail and inconstant.

That may also quickly be lost through negligence, which with much labour and time was hardly gotten by grace.

VII. What will become of us yet in the end: who grow lukewarm so very soon?

Woe be to us if we are for giving ourselves to rest, as if we had already met with peace and security, when there does not appear any mark of true sanctity in our conversation.

It would be very needful that we should

yet again, like good novices, be instructed in all good behaviour: if so, perhaps there would be hopes of some future amendment, and greater spiritual progress.

Practical Reflections.

WHAT a happiness, and what a gain to seek and to find God; in whom we may repose all our cares, and end all our miseries! And how happy are we in knowing and feeling that it is really true happiness,—a heaven upon earth,—to suffer all for God's sake; even such things as are most humiliating and repugnant to our nature! for this can proceed only from the pure love of God. How miserable are we if we are not sensible of, or love the miseries of this life, and sigh not incessantly for the enjoyments of the life to come! How justly does St. Gregory observe that, to act thus, is to love hunger and misery, and not to love nourishment and happiness! Can we experience every hour, as we do, the inconstancy and frailty of our hearts, how soon we forget our good resolutions, and how light we make of our promises to God, and not humble ourselves in his presence, and implore him with holy Judith, to fortify us and make us faithful?

Prayer.

WE beseech thee, O Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, to support us in the perpetual combats we are summoned to maintain against our passions, our self-love, and our whole self, which is so opposed to thee; for alas! O God, what can we do of ourselves, if thou support us not, but fall into sin and offend thee? Leave us not therefore to ourselves, but strengthen us in the inward man, that so we may at all times and in all things renounce our evil inclinations, which are incessantly endeavouring to withdraw our hearts from thee. Complete thy conquest, and make us all thine own for ever Amen.



Chapter Twenty-third.

Of the thoughts of death.

I. **VERY** quickly must thou be gone from hence: see then how matters stand with thee: a man is here to-day, and to-morrow he is vanished.

And when he is taken away from the sight, he is quickly also out of mind.

O! the dullness and hardness of man's

heart, which only thinks on what is present, and looks not forward to things to come!

Thou oughtest in every action and thought so to order thyself, as if thou wert immediately to die.

If thou hadst a good conscience, thou wouldst not much fear death.

It were better for thee to fly sin, than to be afraid of death.

If thou art not prepared to-day, how wilt thou be to-morrow?

To-morrow is an uncertain day; and how dost thou know that thou shalt be alive to-morrow?

II. What benefit is it to live long, when we advance so little?

Ah! long life does not always make us better, but often adds to our guilt!

Would to God we had behaved ourselves well in this world, even for one day!

Many count the years of their conversion; but oftentimes the fruit of amendment is but small.

If it be frightful to die, perhaps it will be more dangerous to live longer.

Blessed is he that has always the hour of his death before his eyes, and every day disposes himself to die.

If thou hast at any time seen a man die, think that thou must also pass the same way.

III. In the morning, imagine thou shalt not live till night: and when evening comes,

presume not to promise thyself the next morning.

Be therefore always prepared, and live in such a manner, that death may never find thee unprovided.

Many die suddenly, and when they little think of it: *For the Son of Man will come at the hour when he is not looked for.* Matt. xxiv. When that last hour shall come, thou wilt begin to have quite other thoughts of thy whole past life: and thou wilt be exceedingly grieved that thou hast been so negligent and remiss.

IV. How happy and prudent is he who strives to be such now in this life, as he desires to be found at his death.

For it will give a man a great confidence of dying happily, if he has a perfect contempt of the world, a fervent desire of advancing in virtue, a love for discipline, the spirit of penance, a ready obedience, self-denial, and patience in bearing all adversities for the love of Christ.

Thou mayest do many good things whilst thou art well: but when thou art sick, I know not what thou wilt be able to do.

Few are improved by sickness: they also that travel much abroad seldom become holy.

V. Trust not in thy friends and kinsfolks, nor put off the welfare of thy soul to hereafter; for men will sooner forget thee than thou imaginest.

It is better now to provide in time and send some good before thee, than to trust to others helping thee after thy death.

If thou art not now careful for thyself, who will be careful for thee hereafter ?

The present time is very precious : *Now are the days of salvation*: now is an acceptable time.

But it is greatly to be lamented, that thou dost not spend this time more profitably ; wherein thou mayest acquire a stock on which thou mayest live for ever ! The time will come, when thou wilt wish for one day or hour to amend : and I know not whether thou wilt obtain it.

VI. O my dearly beloved, from how great a danger mayest thou deliver thyself : from how great a fear mayest thou be freed, if thou wilt but now be always fearful, and looking for death !

Strive now so to live, that in the hour of thy death thou mayest rather rejoice than fear.

Learn now to die to the world, that then thou mayest begin to live with Christ.

Learn now to despise all things, that then thou mayest freely go to Christ.

Chastise thy body now by penance, that thou mayest then have an assured confidence.

VII. Ah fool ! why dost thou think to live long, when thou art not sure of one day ?

How many thinking to live long, have

pare me for that awful moment. Assist me to become diligent in my employments, faithful to thy graces, attentive at my prayers, regular in frequenting the sacraments, and constant in the performance of those good works, and in the practice of those virtues which are proper for my state; that so, through thy merits, I may experience consolation in my last moments, and leave this valley of tears in the assured hope of salvation. Grant that I may ever persevere in thy grace, seek in all things to please thee, and breathe only thy love; for by living thus, my Jesus, from thee, for thee, and like unto thee, it will be at all times most advantageous for me to die, that I may never offend thee more, but see, love and enjoy thee for all eternity. Amen.



Chapter Twenty-fourth.

Of judgment and the punishment of sins.

I. In all things look to thy end, and how thou shalt be able to stand before a severe Judge, to whom nothing is hidden: who takes no bribes, nor receives excuses, but will judge that which is just.

O most wretched and foolish sinner, what answer wilt thou make to God, who knows

all thy evils? thou who sometimes art afraid of the looks of an angry man.

Why dost thou not provide for thyself against the day of judgment, when no man can be excused or defended by another: but every one shall have enough to do to answer for himself?

At present thy labour is profitable: thy tears are acceptable; thy sighs will be heard, and thy sorrow is satisfactory, and may purge away thy sins.

II. A patient man hath a great and wholesome purgatory, who receiving injuries is more concerned at another person's sin than his own wrong; who willingly prays for his adversaries, and from his heart forgives offences; who delays not to ask forgiveness of others: who is easier moved to compassion than to anger; who frequently useth violence to himself, and labours to bring the flesh wholly under subjection to the spirit.

It is better now to purge away our sins, and cut up our vices, than to reserve them to be purged hereafter.

Truly we deceive ourselves through the inordinate love we bear to our flesh.

III. What other things shall that fire feed on but thy sins?

The more thou sparest thyself now, and followest the flesh, the more grievously shalt thou suffer hereafter, and the more fuel dost thou lay up for that fire.

In what things a man has more sinned, in those shall he be more heavily punished.

There the slothful shall be pricked forward with burning goads, and the glutton will be tormented with extreme hunger and thirst,

There the luxurious and the lovers of pleasures will be covered all over with burning pitch and stinking brimstone, and the envious, like mad dogs, will howl for grief.

IV. There is no vice which will not have its proper torment.

There the proud will be filled with all confusion; and the covetous be straitened with most miserable want.

There one hour of suffering will be more sharp, than a hundred years here spent in the most rigid penance.

There is no rest, no comfort for the damned: but here there is sometimes intermission of labour, and we receive comfort from our friends.

Be careful at present, and sorrowful for thy sins: that in the day of judgment thou mayest be secure with the blessed.

For then the just shall stand with great constancy against those that afflicted and oppressed them. Wisd. v.

Then will he stand to judge: who now humbly submits himself to the judgment of men.

Then the poor and humble will have great confidence: and the proud will fear on every side.

V. Then will it appear that he was wise in this world, who learned for Christ's sake to be a fool, and despised.

Then all tribulation suffered with patience will be pleasing, *and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.* Ps. cvi.

Then every devout person will rejoice, and the irreligious will be sad.

Then the flesh that has been mortified shall triumph more than if it had always been pampered in delights.

Then shall the mean habit shine, and fine clothing appear contemptible.

Then shall the poor cottage be more commended than the gilded palace.

Then constant patience shall more avail than all the power of the world.

Then simple obedience shall be more prized than all worldly craftiness.

VI. Then a pure and good conscience shall be a greater subject of joy, than learned philosophy.

Then the contempt of riches shall weigh more, than all the treasures of worldlings.

Then wilt thou be more comforted that thou hast prayed devoutly, than that thou hast fared daintily.

Then wilt thou rejoice more that thou hast kept silence, than that thou hast made long discourses, or talked much.

Then will holy works be of greater value, than many fair words.

Then will a strict life and hard penance be more pleasing, than all the delights of the earth.

Learn at present to suffer in little things, that then thou mayest be delivered from more grievous sufferings.

Try first here what thou canst suffer hereafter.

If thou canst now endure so little, how wilt thou be able to bear everlasting torments?

If a little suffering now makes thee so impatient, what will hell fire do hereafter?

Surely thou canst not have thy pleasure in this world, and afterwards reign with Christ.

VII. If to this day thou hadst always lived in honours and pleasures: what would it avail thee, if thou wert now in a moment to die?

All then is vanity, but to love God. and to serve him alone!

For he that loves God with his whole heart, neither fears death, nor punishment, nor judgment, nor hell: because perfect love gives secure access to God.

But he that is yet delighted with sin, no wonder if he be afraid of death and judgment.

It is good, however, that if love, as yet, reclaim thee not from evil, at least the fear of hell restrain thee.

But he that lays aside the fear of God, will not be able to continue long in good, but will quickly fall into the snares of the devil.

Practical Reflections.

How powerfully do the fear of God's judgments, and the dread of a miserable eternity, act as a restraint upon our passions, arrest the sallies of temper and oblige us to withdraw from the allurements and pleasures of sin! To what end (let us say to ourselves in time of temptation) is the criminal pleasure of this sin of revenge, impurity, anger, injustice, or lying?—to afford myself a momentary gratification. And should I die immediately after having yielded, without repentance, without the sacraments, (which may happen, and which does happen to thousands) where will terminate this sinful enjoyment?—in a miserable eternity. A momentary pleasure, an eternity of pain! No I will not expose myself to the danger of being miserable for ever, for the sake of a moment of pleasure. How true it is, according to the wiseman, that to avoid sin, at least habitual sin, we must remember our last end. Did we frequently and seriously reflect that we must one day give an exact account of our consciences, of the conduct of our whole lives, of all our sins, to a judge who know-

eth and remembereth all things; who would not be terrified at the apprehension of judgment, and of the terrible account we are then to give, and would not watch over himself, and endeavour to correct all his faults? Let us be convinced that the sure way to avoid condemnation in the next life, is to condemn and punish ourselves in this.

Prayer.

O SOVEREIGN Judge of the living, and of the dead, who wilt decide our eternal doom, remember that thou art our Saviour as well as our Judge, and that as much as our sins have provoked thee to wrath, thy sacred wounds have inclined thee to mercy. Look therefore on those wounds inflicted on thee, for our sins, and on the blood which thou hast shed for their expiation, and by those precious pledges of salvation, we conjure thee to pardon our manifold transgressions. Amen.



Chapter Twenty-fifth.

Of the fervent amendment of our whole life.

I. BE vigilant, and delight in God's service, and often think with thyself to what

end thou camest hither, and why thou didst leave the world : was it not that thou mightest live to God, and become a spiritual man ?

Be fervent therefore in thy spiritual progress, for thou shalt shortly receive the reward of thy labours : and then grief and fear shall no more come near thee.

Thou shalt labour now a little, and thou shalt find great rest : yea, everlasting joy.

If thou continue faithful and fervent in working, God will doubtless be faithful and liberal in rewarding.

Thou must preserve a good and firm hope of coming to the crown : but must not think thyself secure, lest thou grow negligent or proud.

II. When a certain person in anxiety of mind, was often wavering between hope and fear ; and on a time being overwhelmed with grief, had prostrated himself in prayer, in the church, before a certain altar, he revolved these things within himself, saying : *If I did but know that I should still persevere :* and presently he heard within himself an answer from God : *And if thou didst know this, what wouldst thou do ? Do now what thou wouldst then do, and thou shalt be very secure.*

And immediately being comforted and strengthened, he committed himself to the divine will, and his anxious wavering ceased.

Neither had he a mind any more to search

curiously, to know what should befall him hereafter; but rather studied to inquire what was the will of God, *well pleasing and perfect*, for the beginning and accomplishing every good work.

Hope in the Lord, and do good, saith the prophet and inhabit the land, and thou shalt be fed with the riches thereof. Ps. xxxi.

There is one thing which keeps many back from spiritual progress and fervent amendment of life: and that is, the apprehension of difficulty, or the labour which must be gone through in the conflict.

And they indeed advance most of all others in virtue, who strive manfully to overcome those things which they find more troublesome or contrary to them.

For there a man makes greater progress, and merits greater grace, where he overcomes himself more, and mortifies himself in spirit.

IV. But all men have not alike to overcome and mortify.

Yet he that is diligent and zealous, although he have more passions to fight against, will be able to make a greater progress than another who has fewer passions, but is withal less fervent in the pursuit of virtues.

Two things particularly conduce to a great amendment: these are forcibly to withdraw one's-self from that to which nature is vici-

ously inclined, and earnestly to labour for that good which one wants the most.

Study likewise to fly more carefully, and to overcome those faults which most frequently displease thee in others.

V. Turn all occasions to thy spiritual profit: so that if thou seest or hearest any good examples, thou mayest be spurred on to imitate them.

But if thou observe any thing that is blame-worthy, take heed thou commit not the same: or if thou at any time hast done it, labour to amend it out of hand.

As thine eye observeth others; so art thou also observed by others.

O how sweet and comfortable it is to see brethren fervent and devout, regular and well disciplined!

How sad a thing, and how afflicting, to see such walk disorderly, and who practice nothing of what they are called to!

How hurtful it is to neglect the intent of our vocation, and to turn our minds to things that are not our business.

VI. Be mindful of the resolution thou hast taken, and set before thee the image of the *crucifix*.

Well mayest thou be ashamed, if thou looked upon the life of Jesus Christ, that thou hast not yet studied to conform thyself more to his pattern, although thou hast been long in the way of God.

A religious man, who exercises himself seriously and devoutly in the most holy life and passion of our Lord, shall find there abundantly all things profitable and necessary for him: nor need he seek for any thing better out of Jesus.

O if our crucified Jesus did but come into our heart, how quickly and sufficiently learned should we be!

VII. A fervent religious man bears and takes all things well that are commanded him.

A negligent and lukewarm religious man has trouble upon trouble, and on every side suffers anguish: because he has no comfort within, and is hindered from seeking any without.

A religious man that lives not in discipline, lies open to dreadful ruin.

He that seeks to be more loose and remiss will always be uneasy: for one thing or other will always displease him.

VIII. How do so many other religious do, who live under strict monastic discipline?

They seldom go abroad; they live very retired; their diet is very poor; their habit coarse: they labour much; they speak little: they watch long: they rise early; they spend much time in prayer; they read often: and keep themselves in all kind of discipline.

Consider the *Carthusians*, the *Cistercians*, and the monks and nuns of divers orders:

how every night they rise to sing psalms to the Lord.

It would therefore be a shame for thee to be sluggish at so holy a time, when such multitudes of religious begin with joy to give praises to God.

IX. O that we had nothing else to do but to praise the Lord our God with our whole heart and mouth!

O that thou didst never want to eat, nor drink, nor sleep, but couldst always praise God, and be employed solely in spiritual exercises!

Thou wouldst then be much more happy than now, whilst thou art under the necessity of serving the flesh.

Would to God there were no such necessities, but only the spiritual refreshments of the soul, which, alas, we taste too seldom!

X. When a man is come to this, that he seeks his comfort from nothing created, then he begins perfectly to relish God: then likewise will he be well content, however matters happen to him.

Then will he neither rejoice for much, nor be sorrowful for little: but will commit himself wholly and confidently to God, who is to him all in all: to whom nothing perishes or dies, but all things live to him, and serve him at a beck without delay.

XI. Always remember thy end, and that time once lost never returns.

Without care and diligence thou shalt never acquire virtues.

If thou beginnest to grow lukewarm, thou wilt begin to be uneasy.

But if thou givest thyself to fervour, thou shalt find great peace: and the grace of God and love of virtue will make thee feel less labour.

A fervent and diligent man is ready for all things.

It is a greater labour to resist vices and passions, than to toil at bodily labours.

He that does not shun small defects, by little and little falls into greater.

Thou wilt always rejoice in the evening, if thou spend the day profitably.

Watch over thyself, stir up thyself, admonish thyself; and whatever becometh of others, neglect not thyself.

The greater violence thou offerest to thyself, the greater progress thou wilt make. Amen.

Practical Reflections.

ACCORDING to our zeal for advancement, we take advantage of the good we see, to practice it, and to carry us to God. To advance in virtue, we must overcome and renounce ourselves in all things, and die to the insatiable desires of our hearts. It is certain that we can only merit in the service

of God, in proportion as we do violence to ourselves. Wherefore let us fight against, and subdue the irregular inclinations which allure us to sin, or to relaxation of our fervour: by this means we shall secure our salvation. A vigorous, constant, and generous effort to overcome ourselves, forwards us more in the ways of perfection, and salvation, than all those fruitless desires by which we would give ourselves to God, yet do not what we would. The more we die to ourselves, the more do we live to God, and the more we refuse to gratify ourselves, so much the more do we please him. How delightful must the life of that christian be, whose desires are so regulated, that his chief happiness is in denying himself, and pleasing God! How sure a means of obtaining a happy eternity!

Prayer.

THOU knowest, O Jesus, the extreme difficulty we experience in subduing and subduing ourselves to thee; suffer not this difficulty to hinder us from accomplishing it. It is just we should prefer thy glory, and thy holy will, to our own will and gratification, and hence we are resolved to do so. Strengthen us in this resolution, and make us faithful; grant that all in us may yield to thee, and, that, advancing daily in virtue, and

94 **THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST.**

leading a supernatural, and through thy merits, an acceptable life, we may become worthy of thy grace here, and of thy eternal glory hereafter. Amen.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

THE
FOLLOWING OF CHRIST.

BOOK II.

Chapter First.

Of interior conversation.

I. THE kingdom of God is within you, saith the Lord. Luke vii.

Convert thyself with thy whole heart to the Lord: and quit this miserable world, and thy soul shall find rest.

Learn to despise exterior things, and give thyself to the interior, and thou shalt see the kingdom of God will come into thee.

For the kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, which is not given to the wicked.

Christ will come to thee, discovering to thee his consolation, if thou wilt prepare him a fit dwelling within thee.

All his glory and beauty is in the interior, and there he pleaseth himself.

Many a visit doth he make to the *internal man*, sweet is his communication with him, delightful his consolation, much peace, and a familiarity exceedingly to be admired.

II. O faithful soul, prepare thy heart for this thy Spouse, that he may vouchsafe to come to thee, and dwell in thee.

For so he saith: *If any man love me, he will keep my word, and we will come to him, and we will make our abode with him.*
John xiv.

Make room then for Christ within thee, and deny entrance to all others.

When thou hast Christ, thou art rich, and he is sufficient for thee: he will provide for thee, and will be thy faithful *Procurator* in all things, so that thou needest not trust to men.

For men quickly change, and presently fail: but Christ remains for ever, and stands by us firmly to the end.

III. There is no great confidence to be put in a frail mortal man, though he be profitable and beloved: nor much grief to be taken, if sometimes he be against thee and cross thee.

They that are with thee to-day, may be against thee to-morrow: and on the other hand often change like the wind.

Place thy whole confidence in God, and

let him be thy fear and thy love : he will answer for thee, and do for thee what is for the best.

Thou hast not here a lasting city ; and wherever thou art, thou art a stranger and a pilgrim : nor wilt thou ever have rest, unless thou be interiorly united to Christ.

IV. Why dost thou stand looking about thee here, since this is not thy resting place ?

Thy dwelling must be in heaven : and all things of the earth are only to be looked upon as passing by.

All things pass away, and thou along with them.

See that thou cleave not to them, lest thou be ensnared and be lost.

Let thy thought be with the Most High, and thy prayer directed to Christ without intermission.

If thou knowest not how to meditate on high and heavenly things, rest on the passion of Christ, and willingly dwell in his sacred wounds.

For if thou fly devoutly to the wounds and precious stigmas of Jesus, thou shalt feel great comfort in tribulation : neither wilt thou much regard the being despised by men, but wilt easily bear up against detracting tongues.

V. Christ was also in this world despised by men : and in his greatest necessity for-

D

saken by his acquaintance and friends in the midst of reproach.

Christ would suffer and be despised and dost thou dare to complain of any one?

Christ had adversaries and backbiters, and wouldst thou have all to be thy friends and benefactors?

Whence shall thy patience be crowned, if thou meet with no adversity?

If thou wilt suffer no opposition, how wilt thou be a friend of Christ?

Suffer with Christ and for Christ, if thou desirest to reign with Christ.

VI. If thou hadst once perfectly entered into the interior of Jesus, and experienced a little of his burning love, then wouldst thou not care at all for thy own convenience, or inconvenience, but wouldst rather rejoice at reproach, because the love of Jesus makes a man despise himself.

A lover of Jesus and of *truth*, and a true internal man, that is free from inordinate affections, can freely turn himself to God, and in spirit elevate himself above himself, and rest in enjoyment.

VII. He to whom all things relish as they are, *viz.* in God, who is the very truth, not as they are said or esteemed to be, he is wise indeed, and taught rather by God than men.

He who knows how to walk internally, and to make little account of external things,

is not at a loss for proper places or times for performing devout exercises.

An internal man quickly recollects himself, because he never pours forth his whole self upon outward things.

Exterior labour is no prejudice to him, nor any employment which for a time is necessary: but as things fall out, he so accommodates himself to them.

He that is well disposed and orderly in his interior, heeds not the strange and perverse carriages of men.

As much as a man draws things to himself, so much is he hindered and distracted by them.

VIII. If thou hadst a right spirit within thee, and wert purified from earthly affections, all things would turn to thy good and to thy profit.

For this reason do many things displease thee, and often trouble thee; because thou art not as yet perfectly dead to thyself, nor separated from all earthly things.

Nothing so defiles and entangles the heart of man, as impure love to created things.

If thou reject exterior comfort, thou wilt be able to contemplate heavenly things, and frequently to feel excessive joy interiorly.

Practical Reflections.

“**CONVERT** thyself with thy whole heart to the Lord. Learn to despise exterior things, and give thyself to the interior.” These words teach us that the true happiness and only merit of this life, consist in retirement, and recollection in God, which are maintained by means of a respectful remembrance of his presence, and a continual turning of our souls towards him. A recollected mind and a faithful heart form the character of an interior man who adores God in spirit and in truth; that is, who pays him that interior homage, which becometh his sovereign greatness, and is so necessary for a soul whose sole business is to live in God, and for God. It is this abiding of God in the soul, this establishment of the soul in God, by raising itself up to him in sighs and lamentations, and by casting its whole self upon him, which enables it to live an interior life, a life of merit, and above nature, which is a heaven upon earth, and an anticipated possession of the felicity of God. I am resolved therefore to mortify my senses, to banish from my mind all vain and useless reflections, and to keep a strict guard over my heart, that nothing may enter therein, but what will promote the fear and love of Jesus Christ. Every thing else shall be to

me as though it were not; and I will endeavour above all things, to know, love, and imitate my Redeemer, content to suffer all for him, and in him, that I may one day reign with him. O my soul! breathe only his love, live only to please him, sigh only for the happiness of possessing him.

Prayer.

O MY most amiable Saviour! the life of my soul! the only object of my hope, and the assurance of my salvation! Come, take possession of a heart which is already thine, infuse into it the spirit of thy mysteries, thy interior dispositions, and the virtues which thou didst practice. Grant that, animated by thy spirit, living in and by thee, and, as it were, clothed with thy justice, I may become more thine, than my own. Mayest thou live in me; and may I, by a happy transmutation, yielding myself entirely to thee, act only from the impulse of thy love. Amen.



Chapter Second.

Of humble submission.

I. MAKE no great account who is for thee, or against thee; but let it be thy business and thy care, that God may be with thee in every thing thou dost.

Have a good conscience, and God will sufficiently defend thee.

For he whom God will help, no man's malice can hurt.

If thou canst but hold thy peace and suffer, thou shalt see without doubt that the Lord will help thee.

He knows the time and manner of delivering thee, and therefore thou must resign thyself to him.

It belongs to God to help and to deliver us from all confusion.

Oftentimes it is very profitable for the keeping us in greater humility, that others know and reprehend our faults.

II. When a man humbles himself for his defects, he then easily appeases others, and quickly satisfies those that are angry with him.

The humble man, God protects and delivers: the humble he loves and comforts: to

the humble he inclines himself : to the humble he gives grace : and after he has been depressed, raises him to glory.

To the humble he reveals his secrets, and sweetly draws and invites him to himself.

The humble man having received reproach, maintains himself well enough in peace : because he is fixed in God, and not in the world.

Never think thou hast made any progress, till thou look upon thyself inferior to all.

Practical Reflections.

How easy it is, when we are approved of, esteemed and praised by others, to say we are unworthy of such honour, and deserve only contempt. To know whether we speak the truth, let us see if we should say the same under humiliation and contempt. Upon this point I am resolved to accept, as from the hand of God, all the evil that may be said or done against me, as my due, and far from murmuring, I will bless the Lord when he permits others to do me injustice, that I may obtain mercy : esteeming it too great a happiness to die, and to be extinguished in the minds of men, that I may live only in the mind of God.

Prayer.

THOU knowest, O God, how sensible I am to contradictions, calumnies, and contempt. Every thing revolts within me when I have occasion to suffer them. But I know that what is impossible to me, is easy to thee, and that, supported and fortified by the help of thy grace, I can patiently endure humiliations, which, of myself, I should receive with murmurs and vexation. Grant then, O my Saviour! that governed by thy maxims, and animated by thy spirit, I may regard with horror, the glory, esteem, and praise, which so often render me contemptible in thy sight; and, on the contrary, receive injuries and affronts, with submission and gratitude, that so I may hope to become an object of thy love, and secure for myself an eternal weight of glory. Amen.

**Chapter Third.**

Of a good peaceable man.

1. KEEP thyself first in peace, and then thou wilt be able to bring others to peace.

A peaceable man does more good, than one that is very learned.

A passionate man, turns every good into evil, and easily believes evil.

A good peaceable man, turns all things to good.

He that is in perfect peace suspects no man : but he that is discontented and disturbed, is tossed about with various suspicions : he is neither easy himself, nor does he suffer others to be easy.

He often says that which he should not say : and omits that which would be better for him to do.

He considers what others are obliged to do : and neglects that to which he himself is obliged.

Have therefore a zeal in the first place over thyself, and then thou mayest justly exercise thy zeal towards thy neighbour.

II. Thou knowest well enough how to excuse and colour thy own doings, and thou wilt not take the excuses of others.

It were more just, that thou shouldst accuse thyself, and excuse thy brother.

If thou wilt be borne withal, bear also with another.

See how far thou art yet from true charity and humility, which knows not how to be angry with any one, or to have indignation against any one but one's self.

It is no great thing to be able to converse with them that are good and meek : for this is naturally pleasing to all.

And every one would willingly have peace, and love those best, that agree with them.

But to live peaceably with those that are harsh and perverse, or disorderly, or such as oppose us, is a great grace, and a highly commendable and manly exploit.

III. Some there are that keep themselves in peace, and have peace also with others.

And there are some that are neither at peace within themselves, nor suffer others to be in peace: they are troublesome to others, but always more troublesome to themselves.

And some there are who keep themselves in peace, and study to restore peace to others.

Yet all our peace in this miserable life is rather to be placed in humble suffering, than in not feeling adversities.

He who knows how to suffer, will enjoy much peace.

Such a one is conqueror of himself and Lord of the world, a friend of Christ, and an heir of heaven.

Practical Reflections.

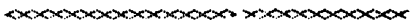
GRANTING the principle laid down in this chapter, that true peace consists much more in humbly submitting to what is contrary to our inclinations, than in meeting with nothing to thwart them, we must resolve to keep peace in contradictions, and to be calm

in the midst of storms, patiently and meekly enduring persecution, and all the evil that others may do or say against us. A soul that is truly humble complains only of itself; it endeavours to excuse others, while it blames itself, and is angry with no one but itself. I am resolved, therefore, to live in peace with God, by obeying him in all things; in peace with my neighbour, by not censuring his conduct, nor interfering with his affairs: and in peace with myself, by combating and subduing, on all occasions, the emotions and repugnances of my heart.

Prayer.

THOU hast said, O Lord, by the mouth of thy prophet: *seek after peace and pursue it*, that is, cease not to seek it until thou hast found it. Only thou, my Jesus, canst bestow it upon me, for thou alone didst accomplish my peace and reconciliation with thy Father, upon the cross. I have long sought to live in peace with thee, with my neighbour, and with myself; but my infidelities, my selfish feelings, and the sallies of passion are causes of perpetual trouble to my soul, and hinder me from tasting its sweets. O my Saviour, thou who didst calm the tempests, thou whom the winds and the sea obeyed, calm the agitations of my troubled soul, which can no where find true repose,

but in thee. Grant that, resigning myself in all things to thy blessed will, I may find peace and happiness in being, doing, quitting, and suffering whatever thou shalt appoint. Amen.



Chapter Fourth.

Of a pure mind and simple intention.

I. WITH two wings a man is lifted up above earthly things; that is with *simplicity* and *purity*.

Simplicity must be in the intention, *purity* in the affection.

Simplicity aims at God, *purity* takes hold of him, and tastes him.

No good action will hinder thee, if thou be free, from inordinate affection.

If thou intendest and seekest nothing else but the will of God, and the profit of thy neighbour, thou shalt enjoy internal liberty.

If thy heart were right, then every creature would be to thee a looking-glass of life, and a book of holy doctrine.

There is no creature so little and contemptible as not to manifest the goodness of God.

II. If thou wert good and pure within, then wouldst thou discern all things without impediment, and understand them right.

A pure heart penetrates heaven and hell,
According as every one is interiorly, so he
judgeth exteriorly.

If there be joy in the world, certainly the
man whose heart is pure enjoys it.

And if there be any where tribulation and
anguish, an evil conscience feels the most of
it.

As iron put into the fire loses the rust
and becomes all fiery, so a man that turns
himself wholly to God puts off his sluggish-
ness, and is changed into a new man.

III. When a man begins to grow luke-
warm, he is afraid of a little labour, and
willingly takes external comfort.

But when he begins perfectly to overcome
himself, and to walk manfully in the way of
God, then he makes less account of those
things, which before he considered burthen-
some to him.

Practical Reflections.

PURITY of heart consists in detachment
from every thing that can defile it. A vo-
luntary fault, an unguarded glance of the
eye, a turning away from God, imprints a
blemish upon the soul, which defaces its
beauty, and disfigures it in the sight of God.
*Blessed, says Jesus Christ, are the clean of
heart, for they shall see God. They shall
know him by a lively and experimental faith*

Thou wilt never be internal and devout, unless thou pass over in silence other men's concerns, and particularly look to thyself.

If thou attend wholly to thyself, and to God, thou wilt be little moved with what thou perceivest without thee.

Where art thou, when thou art not present to thyself?

And when thou hast run over all things, what profit will it be to thee, if thou hast neglected thyself?

If thou desirest to have peace and true union, thou must set all the rest aside, and turn thy eyes upon thyself alone.

III. Thou wilt then make great progress, if thou keep thyself free from all temporal care.

But if thou set a value upon any thing temporal, thou wilt fail exceedingly.

Let nothing be great in thy eyes, nothing high, nothing pleasant, nothing agreeable to thee, except it be purely God, or of God.

Look upon as vain, all the comfort which thou meetest with from any creature.

A soul that loveth God despiseth all things that are less than God.

None but God eternal and incomprehensible, who fills all things, can afford true comfort to the soul, and true joy to the heart.

Practical Reflections.

USELESS reflections upon ourselves, and upon exterior things, occasion us to lose much time, many graces, and much merit. Did we but endeavour to substitute a respectful remembrance of God, in place of a vain or hurtful attention to ourselves, and to creatures, we should be always well employed. To consider God as within us, and ourselves as existing in God; to live under the eye of Jesus Christ by means of recollection, in his hands by resignation, and at his feet by humility, and a sincere acknowledgment of our miseries, is to live really as christians, for we can only be such in proportion as we are devoted to Jesus Christ. Why then are we so much, and so frequently attracted by news, curiosities, and vanity, and so little interested with God, our duties, and our salvation? It is because we are indifferent to the things of eternity, and too much attached to those which pass away with time. Let us, therefore, begin to be now, what we hope to be for ever—occupied only with God, in God, and for God.

Prayer.

CORRECT in me, O Lord, that laziness of mind, in which I squander away my time

with trifles, and that uselessness of thought which withdraws me from the enjoyment of thy presence, and distracts my attention in the time of prayer: or if, when I recite my prayers, I cannot always think of thee, grant that my distractions may not be voluntary, so that whilst they divert my mind, they may never withdraw my heart from thee. Teach me, O Lord, before prayer, to prepare my soul, that urged by my many necessities, and by a desire of pleasing thee, I may fulfil this important duty with a becoming sense of thy awful presence, and of the subject on which I seek relief from thy bounty and mercy. Amen.



Chapter Sixth.

Of the joy of a good conscience.

I. THE glory of a good man, is the testimony of a good conscience.

Keep a good conscience, and thou shalt always have joy.

A good conscience can bear very much, and is very joyful in the midst of adversity.

A bad conscience is always fearful and uneasy.

Sweetly wilt thou take thy rest, if thy heart reprehend thee not.

Never rejoice but when thou hast done well.

The wicked never have true joy, neither do they feel internal peace: because *There is no peace to the wicked*, saith the Lord. *Isaiah* xlvi.

And if they shall say, we are in peace, evils will not come upon us, and who shall dare to hurt us? believe them not; for the wrath of God will rise on a sudden, and their deeds will be brought to nothing, and their projects will perish.

II. To glory in tribulation is not hard to him that loves: for so to glory is to glory in the cross of our Lord.

That glory is short lived, which is given and taken by men.

The glory of the world is always accompanied with sorrow.

The glory of men is in their own consciences, not in the mouths of others.

The joy of the just is from God, and in God: and they rejoice in the *truth*.

He that desires true and everlasting glory, values not that which is temporal.

And he that seeks after temporal glory, or does not heartily despise it, shews himself to have little love for that which is heavenly.

That man has great tranquillity of heart, who neither cares for praises nor dispraises.

III. He will easily be content, and in peace, whose conscience is clean.

Thou art not more holy, if thou art praised: nor any thing the worse if thou art dispraised.

What thou art, that thou art: nor canst thou be said to be greater than God sees thee to be.

If thou considerest well what thou art within thyself, thou wilt not care what men say of thee.

Man beholds the face; but God looks upon the heart.

Man considers the actions! but God weighs the intentions.

To do always well, and to hold one's self in small account, is a mark of an humble soul.

To refuse a comfort from any created thing, is a sign of great purity and interior confidence.

IV. He that seeks no outward testimony for himself, shews plainly, that he has committed himself wholly to God.

For not he that commendeth himself, saith St. Paul, is approved, but he whom God commendeth. 2 Cor. ix.

To walk with God *within*, and not to be held by any affection *without*, is the state of an *internal* man.

Practical Reflections.

THE peace of a good conscience does not always exclude those troubles which are occasioned by temptations and interior trials; but in all the storms which arise, it keeps the heart obedient and faithful to God; submissive under pain, constant in resisting its natural inclinations, and in surmounting all difficulties. Thus saith the royal prophet, *a sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humble heart thou wilt never despise*:—humble from the experience of the weight of its own miseries, and contrite for having deserved to be thus chastised. Let us, therefore form a strong and constant resolution not to suffer ourselves to be discouraged, neither by our falls, nor by our trials, nor by the experience of our miseries; but to humble ourselves before God, at the sight of our wretchedness, to crave pardon for the faults we have committed, through not resisting, as we ought to have done, the enemy of our salvation; to punish ourselves immediately for them, by some act of mortification; and after that, to remain in peace; for a good conscience is that which is either exempt from sin by fidelity, or cleansed from it by repentance.

Prayer.

THOU knowest, O Lord, to how many temptations, interior trials, and dangers we are exposed, both from our natural and violent inclinations to evil, and our unceasing repugnance to good. How shall we be able to resist so many, and such powerful enemies, bent as they are upon our destruction, if thou in thy bounty assist us not? It is to thee we raise up our hearts and our minds, it is to thee we look for succour to keep us from yielding to temptation, to deliver us from the greatest of all evils—sin, and to preserve us from perishing everlastingly. Amen.

**Chapter Seventh.**

Of the love of Jesus above all things.

I. BLESSED is he who knows what it is to love Jesus, and to despise himself for the sake of Jesus.

We must quit what we love for *this* Beloved, because Jesus will be loved alone above all things.

The love of things created is deceitful and inconstant: the love of Jesus is faithful and perseverant.

He that cleaveth to creatures shall fall with them.

He that embraceth Jesus shall stand firm for ever.

Love him, and keep him for thy friend; who, when all go away, will not leave thee, nor suffer thee to perish in the end.

Thou must at last be separated from all things else, whether thou wilt or not.

II. Keep thyself with Jesus both in life and death, and commit thyself to his care, who alone can help thee, when all others fail.

Thy Beloved is of such a nature, that he will admit of no other: but will have thy heart to himself, and sit there like a king on his own throne.

If thou couldst but purify thyself well from affection to creatures, Jesus would willingly dwell with thee.

Thou wilt find all that in a manner loss, which thou hast placed in men out of Jesus.

Do not trust nor rely upon a windy reed: *For all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof shall fade like the flower of the grass.* Isa. xl.

III. Thou wilt soon be deceived, if thou only regard the outward show of men.

For if thou seek thy comfort and thy gain in others, thou wilt often meet with loss.

If in all things thou seek Jesus, doubtless thou wilt find Jesus.

But if thou seek thyself, thou wilt indeed find thyself, but to thine own ruin.

said to her: *The Master is here and calls for thee.* John xiii.

Happy hour when Jesus calls from tears,
to joy of spirit!

How hard and dry art thou without Jesus:
How foolish and vain if thou desire any
thing out of Jesus! Is not this a greater
change than if thou wert to lose the whole
world?

II. What can the world profit thee with-
out Jesus?

To be without Jesus is a grievous hell,
and to be with Jesus a sweet paradise.

If Jesus be with thee, no enemy can hurt
thee.

Whosoever finds Jesus, finds a good trea-
sure, yea good above all goods.

And he that loseth Jesus, loseth exceeding
much, and more than if he lost the whole
world.

He is wretchedly poor, who lives without
Jesus: and he is exceedingly rich, who is
well with Jesus.

III. It is a great art to know how to con-
verse with Jesus: and to know how to keep
Jesus is great wisdom.

Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will
be with thee.

Be devout and quiet, and Jesus will stay
with thee.

Thou mayest quickly drive away Jesus
and lose his grace, if thou decline after out-
ward things.

And if thou drive him away from thee, and lose him, to whom wilt thou fly, and whom then wilt thou seek for thy friend?

Without a friend thou canst not well live; and if Jesus be not thy friend above all, thou wilt be exceedingly sad and desolate.

Thou actest then foolishly, if thou puttest thy trust or rejoicest in any other.

We ought rather to choose to have the whole world against us, than to offend Jesus.

Of all therefore that are dear to thee, let Jesus always be thy special beloved.

IV. Let all things be loved for Jesus' sake, but Jesus for his own sake.

Jesus Christ alone is singularly to be loved, who alone is found good and faithful above all friends.

For him, and in him, let both friends and enemies be dear to thee: and for all these must thou pray to him, that all may know and love him.

Neither desire to be singularly praised or beloved: for this belongs to God alone, who hath none like to himself.

Neither desire that any one's heart should be set on thee: nor do thou let thyself be taken up with the love of any one: but let Jesus be in thee, and in every good man.

V. Be pure and free interiorly, without being entangled by any creature.

Thou must be naked and carry a pure heart to God, if thou wilt attend at leisure, and see how sweet is the Lord.

And indeed thou wilt never attain to this, unless thou be prevented and drawn by his grace: that so thou mayest all *alone* be united to him *alone*, having cast out and dismissed all others.

For when the grace of God comes to a man, then he is strong and powerful for all things; and when it departs, then he is poor and weak, left as it were only to stripes.

In these he must not be dejected nor despair; but stand with an even mind, resigned to the will of God, and bear, for the glory of Jesus Christ, whatever shall befall him: because after winter comes summer; after the night the day returns; after a storm there follows a great calm.

Practical Reflections.

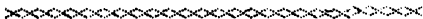
It is difficult to live without some one to whom we can open our hearts, and confide our secrets. But to whom can we better disclose them than to Jesus, who of all others, is a friend the most faithful, the most constant, and the most worthy of our confidence. Seek, therefore, in him alone thy consolation and thy peace; lay open thy heart incessantly before him; have recourse to him in all thy troubles; and be not discouraged if he seem to hide his countenance, for this is only the effect of his love towards thee, and the trial of thy fidelity towards him. Pray,

entreat, and conjure him in his bounty to assist thee, and be assured that sooner or later thou wilt experience the effects of his goodness; preserve thy heart free for him, and detached from every creature; love him for the sake of his own infinite perfections; and love all things else only as they lead thee to him and to his love. In a word, accustom thyself to know him, to speak to him, to love him, and to seek to please him in all things, that living thus in the exercise of his love, the last motion of thy heart may be an act of the love of thy dearest Redeemer.

Prayer.

As thy love for me, O Jesus, is a preventive love, and as thou makest me worthy of thy love, by first loving me, attract and gain my heart, and confirm it in thy love. Grant that, detached from all things, and uninfluenced by the allurements of self-love, I may breathe only thy love; that I may be engaged with thee alone, and attentive only to thee, and neither seek nor love any thing but thee alone, in all things. Be thou, my most amiable Saviour! the reigning object and sovereign good of my soul. Grant, that animated by thy spirit, formed upon thy example, faithful to thy graces, and obedient to thy orders, I may live for thee, from thee, and like thee, in order to commence that oc-

cupation on earth, which I hope to continue in heaven, which is to possess and to love thee. Amen.



Chapter Ninth.

Of the want of all comfort.

I. IT is not hard to despise all human comfort, when we have divine.

But it is much, very much, to be able to want all comfort, both human and divine; and to be willing to bear this interior banishment for God's honour, and to seek one's self in nothing, nor to think of one's own merit.

What great thing is it, if thou be cheerful and devout when grace comes? This hour is desireable to all.

He rides at ease, that is carried by the grace of God.

And what wonder, if he feel no weight, who is carried by the almighty, and led on by the sovereign Guide?

II. We willingly would have something to comfort us: and it is with difficulty that a man can put off himself.

The holy martyr, Lawrence, overcame the world, with his prelate; because he despised whatever seemed delightful in this world;

and for the love of Christ he also suffered the High Priest of God, Sixtus, whom he exceedingly loved, to be taken away from him.

He overcame therefore the love of man by the love of the Creator: and instead of the comfort he had in man, he made choice rather of God's pleasure.

So do thou also learn to part with a necessary and beloved friend for the love of God.

And take it not to heart when thou art forsaken by a friend: knowing that one time or other we must all part.

III. A man must go through a long and great conflict in himself, before he can learn fully to overcome himself, and to draw his whole affection towards God.

When a man stands upon himself, he easily declines after human comforts.

But a true lover of Christ, and a diligent pursuer of virtue, does not hunt after comforts, nor seek such sensible sweetnesses: but is rather willing to bear strong trials and hard labours for Christ.

IV. Therefore when God gives spiritual comfort, receive it with thanksgiving: but know that it is the bounty of God, not thy merit.

Be not puffed up, be not overjoyed, nor vainly presume: but rather be the more humble for this gift, and the more cautious

and fearful in all thy actions: for this hour will pass away, and temptation will follow.

When comfort shall be taken away from thee, do not presently despair; but wait with humility and patience for the heavenly visit: for God is able to restore thee a greater consolation.

This is no new thing, nor strange to those who have experienced the ways of God: for in the great saints and ancient prophets there has often been this kind of variety.

V. Hence one said: at the time when grace was with him: *I said in my abundance, I shall not be moved for ever.* Ps. xxix

But when grace was retired, he immediately tells us what he experienced in himself: *Thou hast turned away thy face from me, and I became troubled.*

Yet in the mean time he despairs not, but more earnestly prays to the Lord, and says: *To thee, O Lord, I will cry, and I will pray to my God.*

At length he receives the fruit of his prayer: and witnesses that he was heard, saying: *The Lord hath heard me, and hath had mercy on me: The Lord is become my helper.*

But in what manner? *Thou hast turned, says he, my mourning into joy to me, and thou hast encompassed me with gladness.*

If it has been thus with great saints, we that are weak and poor must not be dis-

couraged, if we are sometimes fervent, sometimes cold: because the spirit comes and goes according to his own good pleasure.

Wherefore holy Job says: *Thou visitest him early in the morning, and on a sudden thou triest him.* Job vii.

VI. Wherein then can I hope, or in what must I put my trust, but in God's great mercy alone, and in the hope of heavenly grace?

For whether I have with me good men, or devout brethren, or faithful friends, or holy books, or fine treatises, or sweet singing and hymns: all these help little, and give me but little relish, when I am forsaken by grace, and left in my own poverty.

At such a time there is no better remedy than patience, and leaving myself to the will of God.

VII. I never found any one so religious and devout, as not to have sometimes a subtraction of grace, or feel a diminution of fervour.

No saint was ever so highly wrapt and illuminated, as not to be tempted at first or last.

For he is not worthy of the high contemplation of God, who has not, for God's sake, been exercised with some tribulation.

For temptation going before, is usually a sign of ensuing consolation.

For heavenly comfort is promised to such as have been proved by temptation.

E

To him that shall overcome, saith our Lord, I will give to eat of the tree of life.
Apoc. ii.

VIII. Now divine consolation is given, that a man may be better able to support adversities.

And temptation follows, that he may not be proud of good.

The devil never sleeps, neither is the flesh yet dead: therefore thou must not cease to prepare thyself for battle, for on the right hand, and on the left, are enemies that never rest.

Practical Reflections.

As we approach to God by faith, and not by the senses, and as faith of itself is dry and obscure, we must not be surprised if we sometimes experience dryness and desolation; and at other times consolation and joy. All consists in receiving consolation with humility, and in supporting desolation with fortitude and courage. *Silver and gold*, says the wiseman, *are tried in the fire*; and souls before they can become worthy of being admitted to an intimate friendship with God, are tried in the furnace of the most painful and humiliating tribulations. Humble then thy heart under the all-powerful hand of God, and bear with patience the trials of the Lord, who by the temptations

which we resist, makes us little, humble, and dependent upon him, and would have us, in imitation of the holy martyrs, love him in suffering, suffer in loving him, and honour his greatness by our entire destruction of self-love.

Prayer.

How happy are we, O Jesus, when we taste not any good or satisfaction but in thee! But how much more so, when although we receive neither consolation nor delight nor sensible gratification in thy service, we still, in spite of all disgust, persevere in our spiritual exercises faithful to thy grace! It is thus, O God, we prove that we love thee for thyself; that we seek not human comfort, but to please thee, and, that dying to self-satisfaction, which is the natural life of the heart, we make it our delight to please thee, and our true satisfaction to sacrifice our own for thy love. It is just, O Lord, that I should prefer thy holy will to my own inclinations, and that I should serve thee more for thyself, than from any selfish motive. This I desire, O Jesus, but do thou give me courage to accomplish it, and grant that henceforth I may prefer submission to thy good pleasure before every other consolation. Amen.



Chapter Tenth.

Of gratitude for the grace of God.

I. WHY seekest thou rest, since thou art born to labour.

Dispose thyself to patience, rather than consolation: and to bear the cross, rather than to rejoice.

For who is there amongst worldly people, that would not willingly receive comfort and spiritual joy, if he could always have it?

For spiritual consolations exceed all the delights of the world, and pleasures of the flesh.

For all worldly delights are either vain or filthy: but spiritual delights alone are pleasant and honest, springing from virtue, and infused by God into pure minds.

But these divine consolations no man can always enjoy when he will: because the time of temptation is not long away.

II. But what very much opposes these heavenly visits, is a false liberty of mind, and a great confidence in one's self.

God doth well in giving the grace of consolation: but man does ill in not returning it all to God with thanksgiving.

And this is the reason why the gifts of

grace cannot flow in us: because we are ungrateful to the Giver: nor do we return all to the fountain's head.

For grace will always be given to him that duly returns thanks: and what is wont to be given to the humble, will be taken away from the proud.

III. I would not have any such consolation as should rob me of compunction: nor do I wish to have such contemplation as leads to pride.

For all that is high, is not holy; nor all that is pleasant good: nor every desire pure; nor is every thing that is dear to us, pleasing to God.

I willingly accept of that grace, which makes me always more humble and fearful, and more ready to forsake myself.

He that has been taught by the gift of grace, and instructed by the scourge of the withdrawing of it, will not dare to attribute any thing of good to himself; but will rather acknowledge himself to be poor and naked.

Give to God what is his, and take to thyself what is thine: that is, give thanks to God for his grace; but as to thyself, be sensible that nothing is to be attributed to thee, but sin, and the punishment due to sin.

IV. Put thyself always in the lowest place, and the highest shall be given to thee: for the highest stands not without the lowest,

The saints that are highest in the sight of God, are the least in their own eyes : and the more glorious they are, the more humble they are in themselves.

Being full of the truth and heavenly glory, they are not desirous of vain glory.

They that are grounded and established in God, can by no means be proud.

And they that attribute to God all whatsoever good they have received, seek not glory from one another, but that glory which is from God alone : and desire above all things that God may be praised in themselves, and in all the saints, and to this same they always tend.

V. Be grateful then for the least, and thou shalt be worthy to receive greater things.

Let the least be to thee as something very great, and the most contemptible as a special favour.

If thou considerest the dignity of the Giver, no gift will seem to thee little, which is given by so great a God.

Yea, though he give punishment and stripes, it ought to be acceptable : for whatever he suffers to befall us, he always does it for our salvation.

He that desires to retain the grace of God, let him be thankful for grace when it is given, and patient when it is withdrawn.

Let him pray, that it may return : let him be cautious and humble, lest he lose it.

Practical Reflections.

Do not exalt thyself on account of the gifts of God, which are often a help to thy weakness, always the effect of his bounty, and ordinarily above thy deserts. When, in the act of offending him, thou perceivest thy heart touched at the sight of thy ingratitude and infidelity, thou oughtest to humble thyself and be confounded before him at thus experiencing the plenitude of his goodness, and the depth of thy malice.

Penetrated with a lively sorrow for having offended God, who seeks thee even when thou art fleeing away from him, and loads thee with his graces, even when thou provest thyself unworthy of them, return to him by true repentance; ask pardon for thy fault, and think only of avenging him by punishing thyself.

Prayer.

O God! whose bounty is infinite, and whose mercies are proportioned to our miseries, permit us not to be so ungrateful as to forget thy benefits, nor so unfaithful as to become unworthy of thy graces. We acknowledge that we deserve only to be abandoned by thee, we merit but thy hatred and eternal torments; but we conjure thee, O

Saviour, not to deal with us according to our deserts, but according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, which thou art ever desirous of imparting to us. Amen.



Chapter Eleventh.

Of the small number of the lovers of the cross of Jesus.

I. JESUS has now many lovers of his heavenly kingdom: but few that are willing to bear his cross.

He has many that are desirous of comfort, but few of tribulation.

He finds many companions of his table, but few of his abstinence.

All desire to rejoice with him; few are willing to suffer for him.

Many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread; but few to the drinking the chalice of his passion.

Many reverence his miracles; but few follow the ignominy of his cross.

Many love Jesus as long as they meet with no adversity; many praise him and bless him as long as they receive consolations from him.

But if Jesus hide himself, and leave them for a little while: they either fall into complaints, or excessive dejection.

II. But they that love Jesus for Jesus's sake, and not for any comfort of their own, bless him no less in tribulation and anguish of heart, than in the greatest consolation.

And if he should never give them his comfort, yet would they always praise him, and give him thanks.

III. O! how much is the pure love of Jesus able to do, when it is not mixed with any self interest or self love!

Are not all those to be called hirelings, who are always seeking consolation?

Are they not convinced to be rather lovers of themselves than of Christ, who are always thinking of their own profit and gain?

Where shall we find a man that is willing to serve God *gratis*?

IV. Seldom do we find any one so spiritual, as to be stripped of all things.

For who shall be able to find the man that is truly poor in spirit, and divested of all affection to all things created? *His value is* (as of things that are brought) *from afar, and from the remotest coasts.* Prov. xxxi.

If a man gives his whole substance, it is yet nothing.

And if he do great penance, it is yet little.

And if he attain to all knowledge, he is far off still.

And if he have great virtue, and exceeding fervent devotion, there is still much want.

ing to him; to wit, one thing, which is chiefly necessary for him.

And what is that? That having left all things else, he leave also himself and wholly go out of himself, and retain nothing of self-love.

And when he shall have done all things, which he knows should be done, let him think that he has done nothing.

V. Let him not make great account of that which may appear much to be esteemed, but let him in *truth* acknowledge himself to be an unprofitable servant: as Truth itself has said: *When ye shall have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.* Luke xvii.

Then may he be truly poor in spirit, and may say with the prophet, *I am all alone and poor.* Ps. xxiv.

Yet no one is indeed richer than such a man, none more powerful, none more free; who knows how to leave himself and all things, and place himself in the very lowest place.

Practical Reflections.

How many christians adore Jesus, poor in the manger, and suffering upon the cross, who will neither submit to privation, nor endure tribulation for his sake. Yet he was born, and lived and died in poverty and suf-

ferings, to teach us to renounce all things, and to bear our crosses with patience; to teach us the virtues necessary for salvation, by his preaching and example, and to merit for us the grace to practice them. What will it avail thee to adore Jesus Christ, thy Saviour and thy model, if thou dost not imitate him, and place thy whole confidence in him? Take then the generous resolution of renouncing all things, by depriving the senses of all dangerous or unprofitable gratifications; by discarding from thy mind all vanity and self-complacency, and all malignity in condemning others; by stripping thy heart of all attachment to self-satisfaction and self-seeking, on all occasions. Carry this interior poverty and deprivation even so far as to renounce thy own will in all things, to desire only, and to accomplish, the will of God. It is by thus giving up thy whole self to God, that thou wilt constitute him the sole master and proprietor of thy heart, and by stripping thyself of all things here, make him thy inheritance for ever.

Prayer.

I CONCEIVE, O my Saviour, an exalted idea of the bereavement thou requirest of a christian heart, since thou dost oblige it to yield itself up entirely to thee, and to substitute thy love, in place of the love which it

bears for itself! But how far am I from practising it, how incapable of it myself! Help me, O Lord, to give up myself and to die to myself in all things. Suffer not my heart to seek itself, since thou designest it to be entirely thine. Grant that whenever it is tempted to live for, or to seek itself in any thing, it may immediately renounce and die to itself, to live only in and for thee. Then may I say with thy apostle; Jesus Christ is my life, and it is gain for me to die to all, that I may live only in him, and by him, and for him. Amen.



Chapter Twelfth.

Of the king's highway of the holy cross.

I. TO many this seems a hard saying : *Deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow Jesus.* Matt. xvi.

But it will be much harder to hear that last word: *Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire..* Matt. xxv.

For they that at present willingly hear and follow the word of the cross, shall not then be afraid of eternal condemnation.

The sign of the cross will be in heaven, when the Lord shall come to judge.

Then all the servants of the cross, who

in their life time have conformed themselves to him that was crucified, shall come to Christ their judge with great confidence.

II. Why then art thou afraid to take up thy cross, which leads to a kingdom?

In the cross is salvation: in the cross is life: in the cross is protection from thy enemies.

In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness: in the cross is strength of mind: in the cross is joy of spirit.

In the cross is the height of virtue: in the cross is the perfection of sanctity.

There is no health of the soul, nor hope of eternal life, but in the cross.

Take up therefore thy cross and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting.

He is gone before thee, carrying his cross: and he died for thee upon the cross, that thou mayest also bear thy cross, and love to die on the cross.

Because, if thou die with him, thou shalt also live with him: and if thou art his companion in suffering, thou shalt also partake in his glory.

III. Behold the cross is all, and in dying to thyself all consists: and there is no other way to life, and to true internal peace, but the way of the holy cross, and of daily mortification.

Go where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and thou shalt not find a higher way above,

nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy cross.

Dispose and order all things according as thou wilt; and as seems best to thee; and thou wilt still find something to suffer, either willingly or unwillingly, and so thou shalt still find the cross.

For either thou shalt feel pain in the body, or sustain in thy soul tribulation of spirit.

IV. Sometimes thou shalt be left by God, other times thou shalt be afflicted by thy neighbour: and what is more, thou shalt often be a trouble to thyself.

Neither canst thou be delivered or eased by any remedy or comfort: but as long as it shall please God, thou must bear it.

For God would have thee learn to suffer tribulation without comfort, and wholly to submit thyself to him, and to become more humble by tribulation.

No man hath so lively a feeling of the passion of Christ, as he who hath happened to suffer such like things.

The cross therefore is always ready, and every where waits for thee.

Thou canst not escape it, whithersoever thou runnest: for whithersoever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee, and shalt always find thyself.

Turn thyself upwards, or turn thyself downwards: turn thyself without, or turn thyself within thee: and every where thou shalt find the cross.

And every where thou must of necessity have patience if thou desirest inward peace, and wouldst merit an eternal crown.

V. If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy desired end; to wit, to that place where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will be none.

If thou carry it unwillingly, thou makest it a burden to thee, and loadest thyself the more: and nevertheless thou must bear it.

If thou sling away one cross, without doubt thou wilt find another, and perhaps a heavier.

VI. Dost thou think to escape that which no mortal could ever avoid? What saint was there ever in the world without his cross and affliction?

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself was not one hour of his life without suffering: *It behoveth, saith he, that Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead, and so enter into his glory.* Luke xxiv.

And how dost thou pretend to seek another way than this Royal way, which is the way of the holy cross.

VII. The whole life of Christ was a cross, and a martyrdom: and dost thou seek rest and joy?

Thou errest, thou errest if thou seekest any other thing than to suffer tribulations: for this whole mortal life is full of miseries, and beset on all sides with crosses.

And the higher a person is advanced in spirit, the heavier crosses shall he often meet with : because the pain of his banishment increases in proportion to his love.

VIII. Yet this man, thus many ways afflicted, is not without some allay of comfort for his ease ; because he is sensible of the great profit which he reaps by bearing the cross.

For whilst he willingly resigns himself to it, all the burden of tribulation is converted into an assured hope of comfort from God.

And the more the flesh is brought down by affliction, the more the spirit is strengthened by inward grace :

And sometimes gains such strength through affection to tribulation and adversity, by reason of loving to be conformable to the cross of Christ, as not to be willing to be without suffering and affliction : because such a one believes himself by so much the more acceptable to God, as he shall be able to bear more and greater things for him.

This is not man's power, but the grace of Christ, which can and does effect such great things in frail flesh, that what it naturally abhors and flies, even this through fervour of spirit it now embraces and loves.

IX. To bear the cross, to love the cross, to chastise the body, and bring it under subjection ; to fly honours, to be willing to suffer reproaches, to despise one's self, and wish

to be despised; to bear all adversities and losses, and to desire no prosperity in this world, is not according to man's natural inclination.

If thou lookest upon thyself, thou canst do nothing of this of thyself.

But if thou confidest in the Lord, strength will be given thee from heaven, and the world and flesh shall be made subject to thee.

Neither shalt thou fear thine enemy the devil, if thou art armed with faith and signed with the cross of Christ.

X. Set thyself then like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the cross of thy Lord, crucified for the love of thee.

Prepare thyself to suffer many adversities, and divers evils in this miserable life; for so it will be with thee, wherever thou art: and so indeed wilt thou find it, wheresoever thou hide thyself.

It must be so, and there is no remedy against tribulation and sorrow, but to bear them patiently.

Drink of the chalice of thy Lord lovingly, if thou desirest to be his friend, and to have part with him.

Leave consolations to God, to do with them as best pleaseth him.

But prepare thou thyself to bear tribulations, and account them the greatest consolations: for the sufferings of this life bear

no proportion with the glory to come, although thou alone couldst suffer them all.

XI. When thou shalt arrive thus far, that tribulation becomes sweet and savoury to thee for the love of Christ: then think that it is well with thee, for thou hast found a paradise upon earth.

As long as suffering seems grievous to thee, and thou seekest to fly from it, so long will it be il with thee, and the tribulation from which thou fliest, will every where follow thee.

XII. If thou set thyself to what thou oughtest; that is, to suffer and die to thyself, it will quickly be better with thee, and thou shalt find peace.

Although thou shouldst have been wrapt up to the third heaven with St. Paul, thou art not thereby secured that thou shalt suffer no adversity. *I, said Jesus, will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name.* Acts. ix.

To suffer, therefore, is what waits for thee, if thou wilt love Jesus, and constantly serve him.

XIII. Would to God thou wert worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus! how great a glory would be laid up for thee, how great joy would it be to all the saints of God, and how great edification to thy neighbour!

All recommend patience, but, alas! how few are there that desire to suffer!

With good reason oughtest thou willingly to suffer a little for Christ, since many suffer greater things for the world.

XIV. Know for certain that thou must lead a dying life ; and the more a man dies to himself, the more he begins to live to God.

No man is fit to comprehend heavenly things, who has not resigned himself to suffer adversities for Christ.

Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more wholesome for thee in this world, than to suffer willingly for Christ.

And if thou wert to choose, thou oughtest to wish rather to suffer adversities for Christ, than to be delighted with many comforts : because thou wouldst thus be more like to Christ, and more conformable to all the saints.

For our merit and the advancement of our state, consists not in having many sweetnesses and consolations : but rather in bearing great afflictions and tribulations.

XV. If indeed there had been anything better, and more beneficial to man's salvation, than suffering, Christ certainly would have showed it by word and example.

For he manifestly exhorts both his disciples that followed him, and all that desire to follow him, to bear the cross, saying : *If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.* Luke

ix. So that when we have read and searched all, let this be the final conclusion, *that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.* Acts xix.

Practical Reflections.

CAN we read, believe, and reflect seriously on the wonderful advantages of the cross, and the great merit of suffering, as here described, and not love to suffer, to receive crosses from the hands of Jesus Christ, and to submit to endure whatever he pleases, and as much as he pleases, since to suffer much, and in a proper manner, is absolutely requisite for salvation, and is the most tender and efficacious effect of the goodness of God towards us, who would not spare us the pains of time, that he may spare us those of eternity? It is to bear the visible character of the predestinate, which, according to St. Paul, consists in our resemblance to Jesus Christ, an humble suffering and persecuted God; it is to render ourselves worthy of his life of glory by participating in his life of suffering; it is to efface the punishment due to our sins by perfect repentance; it is to gain the heart of Jesus Christ, merit his love, avenge him, and punish ourselves, honour him by our destruction, and prefer his good pleasure before our own satisfaction. Shall not all this console thee under afflic-

tion, and animate thee to bear it with becoming resignation? Say then, in the time of suffering, in order not to fail: "hell which I have deserved is something more horrible than anything I can now endure; my Saviour has suffered much more for me; and heaven is worth infinitely more than I can undergo."

Prayer.

PENETRATE my heart, O Jesus, with these sentiments when thou sendest me pains, and support me in all my afflictions: for alas! thou knowest how naturally I hate and fly from the cross, although I am persuaded that it was by the cross thou didst save me and that I cannot gain salvation, nor enter into heaven, but by the way of Calvary. Inspire me with that patience, that strength, and that courage which thou didst impart to thy martyrs; and since I cannot better evince my love and gratitude towards thee than by suffering for thee, nor render myself more worthy of thy grace and glory, than by carrying the cross, vouchsafe to support me when sinking under its burden by the desire of pleasing thee, and the hope of eternal happiness. Amen.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.

THE
FOLLOWING OF CHRIST.

BOOK III.

Chapter First.

Of the internal speech of Christ to a faithful soul.

[*Disciple.*] I. *I WILL* hear what the Lord God speaketh to me. Ps. lxxxiv.

Happy is that soul, which heareth the Lord speaking within her: and from his mouth receiveth the word of comfort!

Happy ears, which receive the veins of the divine whisper, and take no notice of the whisperings of the world.

Happy ears indeed, which hearken to truth itself teaching within, and not to the voice which soundeth without.

Happy eyes, which are shut to outward things, and attentive to the interior.

Happy they who penetrate into internal things, and endeavour to prepare themselves more and more by daily exercises to the attaining to heavenly secrets!

Happy they who seek to be wholly intent on God, and who rid themselves of every worldly impediment!

Mind these things, O my soul, and shut the doors of thy senses, that thou mayest hear what the Lord thy God speaks within thee.

[*Christ.*] II. Thus saith thy beloved: *I am thy salvation, thy peace, and thy life: abide in me, and thou shalt find peace.*

Let alone all transitory things; seek things eternal.

What are all temporal things but deceit? And what will all things created avail thee, if thou be forsaken by thy Creator?

Cast off then all earthly things, and make thyself agreeable to thy Creator, and faithful to him, that so thou mayest attain to true happiness.

Practical Reflections.

THE soul disposes itself to hear what the Lord speaks to its interior, when devoted to retirement, silence, and prayer, loving to be alone with its God, and seeking him in itself, by a lively and reverential faith, it is attentive and faithful to the motions of his

grace, to the interior influence of his presence, and to the attractions of his love. Thus, to support a spirit of recollection and of faithful love, ever to keep the mind attentive to the will of God, and the heart resolved to accomplish it, is effectually to dispose ourselves to hear God, and to receive the most intimate communications of his spirit. God speaks to us incessantly by his inspirations, and the holy views he imparts to us, to engage us to die to ourselves, and to live only to him. But either we do not hearken to him, or it is only in a careless manner; our whole soul being given to the senses, agitated by the passions, and entirely taken up with exterior things, renders itself incapable and unworthy of the interior operations of God. We should therefore resolve to think and to speak but little to creatures, to love silence and retirement, to nourish our minds with God's presence, and our hearts with his love, and to do all for him and in his sight, if we would become interior men, living in God, and for God, as every christian should do who would be saved.

Prayer.

WEARIED with the demands of my senses, the tumult of my passions, and the inefficacy of my desires, I come to thee, O Jesus, earnestly to implore thee to recall my mind

and my heart to their centre, which is thy presence and thy love. I can no longer endure to live without thee, my God, I can no longer remain a fugitive from thy presence, nor banish myself from thy heart. Ah! how frequently do I ask myself and exterior objects, Where is thy God? Every thing speaks to me of thee, yet nothing brings me to thee. Thou art within me and I seek thee without, which dissipates my mind and removes me at a distance from thee. O life of my soul! the centre of my heart! the supreme and sovereign object of my mind! when shall I see what I now believe, when shall I possess what I love? Grant that the moment thy presence strikes my mind, all within my heart may fall prostrate and yield entirely to thee. Amen.



Chapter Second.

The truth speaks within us without noise of words.

[Disciple.] I. *SPEAK, Lord, for thy servant heareth.* 1 Sam. iii. *I am thy servant, give me understanding that I may know thy testimonies.* Ps. cxviii.

Incline my heart to the words of thy mouth: let thy speech distil as the dew.

Heretofore the children of Israel said

to Moses: *Speak thou to us, and we will hear: let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die.* Exod. xx.

It is not thus, O Lord, it is not thus I pray: but rather with the prophet Samuel, I humbly and earnestly entreat thee, *Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.*

Let not Moses, nor any of the prophets speak to me: but speak thou rather, O Lord God who art the inspirer and enlightener of all the prophets: for thou alone without them canst perfectly instruct me; but they without thee will avail me nothing.

II. They may indeed sound forth words, but they give not the spirit.

They speak well: but if thou be silent they do not set the heart on fire.

They deliver the letter, but thou disclorest the sense.

They publish mysteries, but thou explainest the meaning of the thing signified.

They declare the commandments, but thou enablest us to keep them.

They shew the way, but thou givest strength to walk in it.

They work only outwardly, but thou instructest and enlightenest the heart.

They water exteriorly, but thou givest the increase.

They cry out with words, but thou givest understanding to the hearer.

III. Let not then Moses speak to me, but

thou, O Lord my God, the eternal Truth, lest I die and prove fruitless, if I be only outwardly admonished, and not enkindled within.

Lest the word which I have heard and not fulfilled, which I have known and not loved, which I have believed and not observed, rise up in judgment against me.

Speak then O Lord, for thy servant heareth : for thou hast the words of eternal life.
John vi.

Speak, that it may be for me some comfort to my soul, and for the amendment of my whole life : and to thy praise and glory, and everlasting honour.

Practical Reflections.

God speaks to the understanding by the light of his spirit, and to the heart by his holy inspirations. All that the prophets deliver in the word of God, all the truths which preachers announce to us, cannot enlighten the understanding, nor touch the heart, if God himself speak not to us, by the motions of his grace. We should therefore entreat the Lord to speak to our interior, while we exteriorly attend to or read divine truths, for fear that hearing the word of God and not keeping it, knowing his doctrines and not following them, conscious of his will and not doing it, we should become more and more culpable in his sight.

Prayer.

SPEAK to me, O Lord, speak to my soul, that I may hear and obey thee. Make known to me thy designs for my salvation, and enable me to execute them. Teach all christians, O Jesus, what thou art to them, and what they ought to be to thee. Instruct them in the sacred maxims of thy gospel; and induce them to practice them. For what will it avail us to believe thy heavenly doctrines if we endeavour not to follow them, and to live, as well as to believe as becometh christians? O eternal word of the Father, by which he spoke and all things were made! Speak to my soul, say to it, I am thy salvation. Work in me to will and to do; and consummate my salvation. Amen.



Chapter Third.

That the words of God are to be heard with humility, and that many weigh them not.

[*Christ.*] I. MY son, hear my words, words most sweet, exceeding all the learning of the philosophers, and of the wise men of this world.

My words are *spirit* and life, and not to be estimated by the *sense* of man.

They are not intended to indulge and gratify a vain and humorous fancy, but are to be heard in silence, and received with all humility and great affection.

[*Disciple.*] II. And I said, *Blessed is the man, whom thou, O Lord, shalt instruct, and shall teach him thy law; that thou mayest give him ease from the evil day,* Ps. xciii. and that he may not be desolate upon the earth.

[*Christ.*] III. It is I who have taught the prophets from the beginning, and even till now I cease not to speak to all: but many are deaf to my voice and hard.

The greater number listen more willingly to the world, than to God: and more readily follow the desires of the flesh, than the good will of God.

The world promises things temporal and of small value, and is served with great eagerness: I promise things most excellent and everlasting, and men's hearts are not moved!

Who is there that serves and obeys me in all things, with that great care with which the world and its lords are served? *Be ashamed, O Sidon,* saith the sea.

And if thou ask why, hear the reason.

For a small living men run a great way: for eternal life, many will scarce move a single foot from the ground.

An inconsiderable gain is sought after:

for one penny sometimes men shamefully quarrel: they are not afraid to toil day and night for a trifle, or slight promise.

IV. But, alas! for an unchangeable good, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honour and never-ending glory, they are unwilling to take the least pains.

Be ashamed then, thou slothful servant, who art so apt to complain, seeing that they are more ready to labour for death, than thou for life.

They rejoice more in running after *vanity*, than thou in the pursuit of *truth*.

And indeed they are sometimes frustrated of their hopes: but my promise deceives no man, nor sends away empty him that trusts in me.

What I have promised, I will give: what I have said, I will make good: provided a man continue to the end faithful in my love.

I am the rewarder of all the good, and the strong trier of all the devout.

V. Write my words in thy heart, and think diligently on them: for they will be very necessary in the time of temptation.

What thou understandest not when thou redest, thou shalt know in the day of visitation.

I am accustomed to visit my elect two manner of ways, *viz.* by trials and by comfort.

And I read them daily two lessons: one to rebuke their vices, the other to exhort them to the increase of virtues.

He that has many words, and slights them, has that which shall condemn him at the last day.

A PRAYER

To implore the grace of devotion.

VI. O Lord, my God, thou art all my good; and who am I that I should dare speak to thee.

I am thy most poor servant, and a wretched little worm, much more poor and contemptible than I can conceive or dare express.

Yet remember, O Lord, that I am nothing, I have nothing, and can do nothing.

Thou alone art good, just, and holy. thou canst do all things; thou givest all things: thou fillest all things, leaving only the sinner empty.

Remember thy tender mercies, and fill my heart with thy grace, thou who wilt not have thy works to be empty.

VII. How can I support myself in this wretched life, unless thy mercy and grace strengthen me?

Turn not thy face from me; delay not thy visitation; withdraw not thy comfort; lest my soul become as earth without water to thee.

O Lord, teach me to do thy will, teach me to converse worthily and humbly in thy sight; for thou art my wisdom, who knowest me in Truth, and didst know me before the world was made, and before I was born in the world.

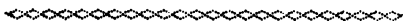
Practical Reflections.

It is astonishing to witness how much men undertake, from a vain and deceitful hope of obtaining temporal and perishable goods, and how very little they do, though encouraged by a solid and certain hope founded upon the word of God, to obtain spiritual and eternal rewards. The prospect of interest, or the uncertain hope of riches, animates every heart, enhances every pleasure, dries up every tear, lightens every labour; and we think ourselves well repaid for our trouble when we have acquired the honour, the pleasure, or the advantage we had in view. The hope of heaven alone, the prospect of eternal happiness, which may be obtained by patience and good works, animates us not, it neither supports nor consoles us; and we are as much cast down and discouraged at the thought of gaining heaven by patient suffering, as though we esteemed it of no value. Whence comes this? It is because we are too much attached to things present, and too indifferent about the things

to come. Our hope is faint because our faith is weak.

Prayer.

WHAT confusion for me, O Lord, that I should give myself so much trouble to please the world, and to gratify my passions, and take so little pains to satisfy thy justice by works of penance, or thy goodness by punctuality in the discharge of my duties! Alas! why do I not undergo as much for thee as for myself? Why is not my ardour to please thee, as fervent as my eagerness to gratify myself? Change, O Lord, change the object and inclinations of my heart. Substitute thyself in my soul, and grant that my love for thee may be as ardent to please thee, as my self-love is to satisfy myself. Give me that love for thee, which may be called a love of indemnification, that is, a love which by its activity and constancy may repair the languor and inconstancy of the love which I have hitherto had for thee. Amen.



Chapter Fourth.

That we ought to walk in truth and humility in God's presence.

[*Christ.*] I. SON walk before me in *truth*, and always seek me in the simplicity of thy heart.

He that walks before me in *truth*, shall be secured from evil occurrences, and *truth* shall deliver him from deceivers and from the detractions of the wicked.

If *truth* be on thy side, thou wilt be free from all anxiety, and unconcerned at all that vain man can say against thee.

[*Disciple.*] Lord, this is true; as thou sayest, so I beseech thee, let it be done with me. Let thy *truth* teach me, let thy *truth* guard me, and keep me till I come to a happy end.

Let the same deliver me from all evil affections, and all inordinate love, and I shall walk with thee in perfect freedom of heart.

[*Christ.*] II. I who am Truth will teach thee those things which are right and pleasing in my sight.

Think on thy sins with great compunction and sorrow: and never esteem thyself to be any thing for thy good works.

III. Thou art indeed a sinner, subject to and entangled with many passions.

Of thyself thou always tendest to nothing, thou quickly fallest, thou art quickly overcome, easily disturbed and dissolved.

Thou hast not anything in which thou canst glory, but many things for which thou oughtest to humble thyself: for thou art much weaker than thou art able to comprehend.

IV. Let nothing then seem much to thee of all thou dost.

Let nothing appear great; nothing valuable or admirable; nothing worthy of esteem; nothing high, nothing truly praiseworthy or desirable; but what is eternal.

Let the *eternal Truth* please thee above all things, and thy own exceeding vileness ever displease thee.

Fear nothing so much, blame and abhor nothing so much, as thy vices and sins, which ought to displease thee more than any losses whatsoever.

Some persons walk not sincerely before me: but being led with a certain curiosity and pride, desire to know the hidden things of my providence and to understand the high things of God, neglecting themselves and their own salvation.

These often fall into great temptations and sins, through their pride and curiosity: because I stand against them.

V. Fear the judgments of God; dread

the anger of the Almighty : but presume not to examine the works of the Most High, but search into thine own iniquities, how many ways thou hast offended, and how much good thou hast neglected.

Some only carry their devotions in their books, some in pictures and some in outward signs and figures.

Some have me in their mouths, but little in their hearts.

There are others, who being enlightened in their understanding, and purified in their affection, always breathe after things eternal, are unwilling to hear of earthly things, and grieve to be subject to the necessities of nature ; and such as these perceive what the spirit of *truth* speaks in them.

For it teaches them to despise the things of the earth, and to love heavenly things ; to disregard the world, and all the day and night to aspire after heaven.

Practical Reflections.

NOTHING can better enable thee to understand what thou art than a sense of thy miseries. As thou feelest within thee an inclination only for evil, so thou wilt not elevate thyself by thoughts of vanity or self-complacency. Happy the soul that knows itself, that knows and bewails its own miseries, weakness and evil inclinations ! It is

this which subjects it to God, and obliges it to have frequent recourse to him and to humble itself under his all-powerful hand. The continual danger it apprehends of yielding to temptation, keeps it in a state of perpetual dependance upon him, and of sincere and constant deprivation for his sake. Be determined then, willingly to receive from the hand of God whatever trials he is pleased to send thee, to enter into his designs, and to submit to his good pleasure.

Prayer.

As I am sensible, O God, that nothing is more pleasing to thee, than the disposition of a soul which depends upon thee in all things, and which applies itself to know and to do thy will, so the grace which I now ask of thee, is that I may be docile to thy inspirations, and faithful in following them. I well know that thou requirest of me a sincere and constant adherence to thy service, an exact fidelity to my duties, and an absolute conformity to thy blessed will. I know that thou requirest me to direct all my actions by an interior spirit, and a real desire of pleasing thee. This above all things, I ask of thee, my God! to be employed only on thee and for thee, to esteem nothing but what is eternal, and to reckon as nothing all that passes away with time. When, O God,

shall an interior life, a life of death to all things, a life hidden with Jesus Christ in thee, become my portion, as it is now my desire? Unite my soul intimately to thyself, captivate and confirm my heart in thy love, both for time and eternity. Amen.



Chapter Fifth.

Of the wonderful effect of divine love.

[*Disciple.*] I. I BLESS thee, O heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ; because thou hast vouchsafed to be mindful of so poor a wretch as I am.

O Father of mercies and God of all comfort, I give thanks to thee, who sometimes art pleased to cherish with thy consolation, me that am unworthy of any comfort.

I bless thee and glorify thee for evermore, together with thy only begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to all eternity.

O Lord God, my holy lover, when thou shalt come into my heart, all that is within me shall be filled with joy.

Thou art my glory, and the joy of my heart.

Thou art my hope, and my refuge in the day of my tribulation.

II. But because I am as yet weak in love

and imperfect in virtue, therefore do I stand in need of being strengthened and comforted by thee. For this reason visit me often, and instruct me in thy holy discipline.

Free me from evil passions, and heal my mind of all disorderly affections; that being healed and well purified in my interior, I may become fit to love, courageous to suffer, and constant to persevere.

III. Love is an excellent thing, a great good indeed: which alone maketh light all that is burthensome, and equally bears all that is unequal.

For it carries a burthen without being burthened, and makes all that which is bitter, sweet and savoury.

The love of Jesus is noble and generous, it spurs us on to do great things, and excites us to desire always that which is more perfect.

Love will tend upwards, and is not to be detained by things on earth.

Love will be at liberty, and free from all worldly affection, lest its interior sight be hindered, lest it suffer itself to be entangled with any temporal interest, or cast low by losses.

Nothing is sweeter than love; nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing more generous, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven or earth: for love pro-

ceeds from God, and cannot rest but in God, above all things created.

IV. The lover flies, runs, and rejoices ; he is free and not held.

He gives all for all, and has all in all ; because he rests in one sovereign *Good* above all, from whom all good flows and proceeds.

He looks not at the gifts, but turns himself to the Giver, above all goods.

Love often knows no measure, but is inflamed above measure.

Love feels no burthen, values no labours, would willingly do more than it can : complains not of impossibility, because it conceives that it may, and can do all things.

It is able therefore to do anything, and it performs and effects many things, where he that loves not, faints and lies down.

V. Love watches, and sleeping, slumbers not.

When weary, is not tired ; when straitened, is not constrained ; when frightened, is not disturbed ; but like a lively flame, and a torch all on fire, it mounts upwards, and securely passes through all opposition.

Whosoever loveth, knoweth the cry of this voice.

A loud cry in the ears of God, is the ardent affection of the soul, which saith, O my God, my Love, thou art all mine, and I am all thine.

VI. Give increase to my love, that I may learn to taste, with the interior mouth of the heart, how sweet it is to love, and to swim, and to be dissolved in love.

Let me be possessed by love, going above myself through excess of fervour and ecstasy.

Let me sing the canticle of love, let me follow thee my Beloved on High, let my soul lose herself in thy praises, rejoicing exceedingly in thy love.

Let me love thee more than myself, and myself only for thee ; and all others in thee, who truly love thee, as the law of love commands, which shines forth from thee.

VII. Love is swift, sincere, pious, pleasant, and delightful ; strong, patient, faithful, prudent, long-suffering, courageous, and never seeking itself : for where a man seeks himself, there he falls from love.

Love is circumspect, humble and upright, not soft, not light, not intent upon vain things ; is sober, chaste, stable, quiet, and keeps a guard over all the senses.

Love is submissive and obedient to superiors ; in its own eyes mean and contemptible : devout and thankful to God, always trusting and hoping in him, even then when it tastes not the relish of God's sweetness, for there is no living in love without some pain or sorrow.

VIII. Whosoever is not ready to suffer all things, and to stand resigned to the will

of his Beloved, is not worthy to be called a Lover.

He that loveth, must willingly embrace all that is hard and bitter for the sake of his Beloved, and never suffer himself to be turned away from him by any contrary occurrences whatsoever.

Practical Reflections.

Who shall ever conceive or explain the wonderful effects of the love of God in a soul that is faithful to his inspirations, and submissive in the time of trial? It is much better to feel them than to speak of them; and it is more perfect to practice them than to feel them.

What does not the love of God effect, when it is active, solid, and constant, in a soul that is captivated with the beauty and goodness of its God, and inflamed with the ardor of his holy charity! It often thinks of him, for we cannot forget what we love; it does all to please him: it suffers all for his sake; it carefully avoids the slightest faults; for how can we love God and be willing to offend him? It desires for God all the good which he is and possesses; it would that all the hearts of men were but one, and this the heart of a seraph; it rejoices in all the glory that is given to him in heaven and on earth; it invites all creatures to love and praise him;

it would procure for him at the expence of its very life and being if it were possible, any addition of happiness and delight; it cannot be consoled for his absence; it sighs incessantly for the happiness of seeing him; it considers this life an exile, which the will of God alone makes supportable; it looks upon death with joy, as being the only means of coming to the possession of him, and of no more offending him; it burns with a secret fire, which with lively ardor consumes it before God, in God and for God; it lives no longer for itself, but for him whom it loves more than itself; it seeks, it finds, it beholds every where its God. Its joy and its felicity in this world, is to suffer, to renounce and to annihilate itself; and to die to all sensible objects in order to gain the love of Jesus. It believes, it hopes, it loves, with a sovereign love, through the respect, esteem, and attachment which it has for the author of its faith, hope and charity. God exists, does it say; and that is my happiness, my consolation and my joy. God deserves to be served; he wills that I should do and suffer this for him; Jesus Christ was most willing to do and to suffer for me. It is not satisfied with submitting itself in every thing to the orders of its God; but it seeks to know his inclinations, and his good pleasure is its law. In a word, a soul which loves its God, no longer lives, but God liveth in it.

Prayer.

Is it possible, O Lord, that thou who art infinitely amiable and who lovest us with an infinite love, shouldst find in us so little love for thee! Revive in our hearts that fire of divine charity, which thou, my Saviour, didst bring from heaven upon the earth, and which thou desirest should glow within us. Grant that becoming insensible and indifferent to all creatures, we may feel neither ardor nor attachment but for thee alone, and that being ever disposed to suffer all and to lose all rather than thy love but for one moment, we may love thee in preference to all things else and esteem our whole self of infinitely less consideration than thee. Preserve us in that habitual love of thee, which is sanctifying grace; inspire us with an active love to animate us in all our actions. Give us that perpetual love, which causing us to do all for and by thee, procures for us the happiness of dying in the exercise of thy love, to continue it throughout a blessed eternity. Amen.

Chapter Sixth.

Of the proof of a true lover.

[*Christ.*] I. MY son, thou art not as yet a valiant and prudent lover.

[*Disciple.*] II. Why, O Lord?

[*Christ.*] III. Because thou fallest off from what thou hast begun, upon meeting with a little adversity, and too greedily seekest after consolation.

A valiant lover stands his ground in temptations, and yields not to the crafty persuasions of the enemy.

As he is pleased with me in prosperity, so I displease him not when I send adversity.

IV. A prudent lover considers not so much the gift of the lover, as the love of the Giver.

He looks more at the good-will, than the value: and prizes his Beloved above all his gifts.

A generous lover rests not in the gift, but in me above every gift.

All is not lost, if sometimes thou hadst not that sense of devotion towards me or my saints, which thou wouldst have.

That good and delightful affection, which thou sometimes perceivest, is the effect of

present grace, and a certain foretaste of thy heavenly country.

But thou must not rely too much upon it, because it goes and comes.

But to fight against the evil motions of the mind which arise, and to despise the suggestions of the devil, is a sign of virtue, and of great merit.

V. Let not therefore strange fancies trouble thee, of what kind soever they be, that are suggested to thee.

Keep thy resolution firm, and thy intention upright towards God.

Neither is it an illusion, that sometimes thou art wrapt into an ecstasy, and presently returnest to the accustomed weaknesses of thy heart.

For these thou rather sufferest against thy will, than procurest; and as long as thou art displeas'd with them, and resisteth them, it is merit and not loss.

VI. Know that the old enemy strives by all means to hinder thy desire after good, and to divert thee from every devout exercise; namely, from the veneration of the saints: from the pious meditation of my passion: from the profitable remembrance of thy sins: from keeping a guard upon thy own heart, and from a firm purpose of advancing in virtue.

He suggests to thee many evil thoughts,

that he may weary thee out, and frighten thee; that he may withdraw thee from prayers, and the reading of devout books.

He is displeased with humble *confession*; and, if he could, he would cause thee to let alone *communion*.

Give no credit to him, value him not, although he often lays his deceitful snares in thy way.

Charge him with it when he suggests wicked and unclean things; and say to him:

Begone, unclean spirit; be ashamed miserable wretch; thou art very filthy indeed to suggest such things as these to me.

Depart from me, thou wicked impostor; thou shalt have no share in me; but my Jesus will be with me, as a valiant warrior, and thou shalt be confounded.

I had rather die, and undergo any torment whatsoever, than yield to thy suggestions.

Be silent, I will hear no more of thee, although thou so often strive to be troublesome to me.

The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear?

If whole armies should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. The Lord is my helper, and my Redeemer. Ps. cvi.

VII. Fight like a good soldier: and if sometimes thou fall through frailty, rise up again with greater strength than before, con-

finding in my more abundant grace ; but take great care thou yield not to any vain complacency and pride.

Through this, many are led into error, and sometimes fall into incurable blindness.

Let this fall of the proud, who foolishly rely on their own strength, serve thee for a warning, and keep thee always humble.

Practical Reflections.

I KNOW that the true love of God may exist more in suffering dryness, disgust and the most grievous temptations, for his sake, than in the enjoyment of interior delights, sweetnesses and consolations. In the one instance we receive much from God, in the other we give much to him. In the one we love the gifts of God, in the other we love himself and his holy will, preferably to all his gifts ; and the love by which we love God for what he is, is much more perfect than that by which we love him for what he bestows upon us. Ah ! how pleasing to Almighty God to behold a soul ever watchful over itself to keep its heart free from the least faults, ever attentive to its duties, in obedience to his orders and in resignation to his holy will, and ever willing generously to resist the demands of nature and the temptations of the devil ! A soul which neither allows nor pardons itself any thing, but endeavours to

correspond with the holy designs of God in its regard, to destroy in itself every thing human, and to overthrow self-love, takes for rule of its conduct that rule of true love; *All to please God, and nothing to gratify myself.* But what most pleases God, is to see that this soul really clothed with the strength and grace of his spirit in all its contests with itself and its passions, can endure nothing contrary to his good pleasure; to see, that it neither asks, nor seeks, nor finds any consolation or sensible support, its delight being the delight which God takes in seeing it suffer, without ever being sensibly assured that he takes pleasure in it. Its submission and its self-renunciation are its consolation and support, happy in becoming a victim of immolation to the love of God.

Prayer.

ABANDON me not, O Lord, to the sensitiveness of self love, which will suffer nothing; nor to the inefficacy of my desires, by which I ever will what I never perform. Penetrate my heart with a conviction of the happiness and obligation of suffering all for thee, and as thou didst suffer. Grant that having no other interest but thine, and willing only what thou willest, I may receive pains of mind as cheerfully as consolations of spirit; that I may often say to thee in the

time of suffering, may thy justice be satisfied whatever I may have to endure in this life; for as thou dost not twice punish the same sin, when thou dost chastise me for my sins in this world, it is a sign thou wilt spare me for eternity. The less I enjoy thee, the more will I love thee; the more will I resist the irregular desires of my heart that I may ultimately deserve the more to possess thee. O my God! my Saviour! I am willing to be deprived of all consolation here below, provided I never offend thee. What a happiness to become a victim of Calvary, a martyr of thy crucified heart, and entirely devoted to thy good pleasure. Amen.



Chapter Seventh.

That grace is to be hid under the guardianship of humility.

MY son, it is more profitable and more safe for thee to hide the grace of devotion, and not to be elevated with it, not to speak much of it, not to consider it much; but rather to despise thyself the more, and to be afraid of it, as given to one unworthy.

Thou must not depend too much on this affection, which may be quickly changed into the contrary.

When thou hast grace, think with thyself how miserable and poor thou art wont to be, when thou art without it.

Nor does the progress of a spiritual life consist so much in having the grace of consolation, as in bearing the want of it with humility, resignation, and patience; so as not to grow remiss in the exercise of prayer at that time, nor to suffer thyself to omit any of thy accustomed good works:

But that thou willingly do what lies in thee, according to the best of thy ability and understanding; and take care not wholly to neglect thyself through the dryness or anxiety of mind which thou perceivest.

II. For there are many, who when things succeed not well with them, presently grow impatient and slothful.

Now the *way of man is not always in his own power*; but it belongs to God to give and to comfort when he will, and as much as he will, and to whom he will, and as it shall please him, and no more.

Some wanting discretion, have ruined themselves upon occasion of the grace of devotion: because they were desirous of doing more than they could, not weighing well the measure of their own weakness, but following rather the inclinations of the heart, than the dictates of reason.

And because they presumptuously under-

took greater things than were pleasing to God, therefore they quickly lost his grace.

They became needy, and were left in a wretched condition, who had built themselves a nest in heaven; to the end, that being thus humbled and impoverished, they might learn not to trust to their own wings, but to hide themselves under mine.

Those who are as yet but novices, and unexperienced in the way of the Lord, if they will not govern themselves by the counsel of discreet persons, will be easily deceived and overthrown.

III. And if they will rather follow their own judgment, than believe others who have more experience, they will be in danger of coming off ill if they continue to refuse to lay down their own conceits.

They that are wise in their own eyes, seldom humbly suffer themselves to be ruled by others.

It is better to have little knowledge with humility, and a weak understanding, than greater treasures of learning with self-conceit.

It is better for thee to have less, than much which may puff thee up with pride.

He is not so discreet as he ought to be, who gives himself up wholly to joy, forgetting his former poverty, and the chaste fear of God, which apprehends the losing that grace which is offered.

Neither is he so virtuously wise, who in the time of adversity, or any tribulation whatsoever, carries himself in a desponding way, and conceives and reposes less confidence in me than he ought.

IV. He who is too secure in the time of peace, will often be found too much dejected and fearful in the time of war.

If thou couldst but always continue humble and little in thy own eyes, and keep thy spirit in due order and subjection, thou wouldst not fall so easily into danger and offence.

It is a good counsel, that when thou hast conceived the spirit of fervour, thou shouldst meditate how it will be with thee when that light shall leave thee.

Which when it shall happen, remember that the light may return again, which for thy instruction, and my glory, I have withdrawn from thee for a time.

V. Such a trial is oftentimes more profitable, than if thou wert always to have prosperity according to thy will.

For a man's merits are not to be estimated by his having many visions or consolations, nor by his knowledge in scriptures, nor by his being placed in a more elevated station : but by his being grounded in true humility, and replenished with divine charity : by his seeking always purely and entirely the honour of God ; by his esteeming

himself to be nothing, and sincerely despising himself; and being better pleased to be despised and humbled by others, than to be the object of their esteem.

Practical Reflections.

MAN in the state of innocence would have served God with sweetness, with ease and with perfect love, because all within him would have submitted without difficulty to his orders; but in the state of sin in which we now are, we cannot serve him without continually fighting against ourselves, nor can we love him without hating ourselves. we can do but little for him but what we do against ourselves. Hence we should humbly submit to the dryness, disgust and irksomeness which we frequently experience in our exercises of piety; we should enter into the designs of Almighty God, make a merit of seeking to please him without gratifying ourselves; and willingly consent to become victims of his love, and to sacrifice all for his honor. Did the truly Christian soul know how far a state of suffering might become a holy and sanctifying state, a state of proved and purified love for God, in a word, a state in which we neither seek nor find ourselves in any thing but purely God, how would that soul setem it! What care would it not take to profit by it, that is, to suffer patiently, to

support the Lord with courage and to neglect nothing, whatever uneasiness might arise! Were we thoroughly persuaded of, and deeply impressed with, a conviction of the continual merit of a life of dryness when supported without dejection, we should without doubt, endeavour to correspond with the designs of God, who would thus oblige us not to seek ourselves in any thing, but to endeavour only to please him and to make a real merit of his good pleasure. We ought to esteem ourselves happy in sacrificing to God the gratifications of our hearts, in yielding ourselves up to him and in doing our duty without ever having the satisfaction of knowing that we please him.

Prayer.

Purify my heart, O Lord, from the pursuits of self love, which is never satisfied with what is done for thee unless it also be gratified by it. Grant that in all my exercises of piety, I may seek rather to please thee, than to gratify myself; that dying daily to the natural life of my soul, in which consists true satisfaction I may seek no other pleasure than fidelity in thy service and exactness in following thy holy will in all things; that so approaching to thee, my God, more by faith than by sense, I may do and suffer all for thy love, notwithstanding my natural aversion and the

deprivation of all the sweetness and sensible charms of piety, persuaded of the truth of what thou didst once say to St. Gertrude, that thou reservest until after death the consolation of all we perform without consolation during life. Grant, therefore, that my whole employment and all my happiness may be to serve and to love thee much more for thyself than for my own gratification. Amen.



Chapter Eighth.

Of acknowledging our unworthiness in the sight of God.

[*Disciple.*] I. *I WILL speak to my Lord, who am but dust and ashes. Gen. xviii.*

If I think anything better of myself, behold thou standest against me : and my sins bear witness to the truth, and I cannot contradict it.

But if I humble myself, and acknowledge my own nothingness, and cast away all manner of esteem of myself, and (as I really am) account myself to be mere dust, thy grace will be favourable to me, and thy light will draw nigh to my heart : and all self esteem, how small soever, will be sunk in the depth

of my own nothingness, and there lose itself for ever.

It is there thou shewest me to myself what I am, what I have been, and what I am to come to: for I am nothing, and I knew it not.

If I am left to myself, behold I am nothing, and all weakness: but if thou shouldst graciously look upon me, I presently become strong, and am filled with a new joy.

And it is very wonderful that I am so quickly raised up, and so graciously embraced by thee: I who by my own weight am always sinking to the bottom.

II. It is thy love that effects this, freely preventing me, and assisting me in so many necessities: preserving me also from grievous dangers, and, as I may truly say, delivering me from innumerable evils.

For by an evil loving of myself, I lost myself: and by seeking thee alone, and purely loving thee, I found both myself and thee, and by this love have more profoundly annihilated myself.

Because thou, O most sweet Lord, art bountiful to me above all I dare hope or ask for.

III. Blessed be thou, O my God; for though I am unworthy of all good, yet thy generosity and infinite goodness never ceaseth to do good even to those who are ungrateful, and that are turned away from thee.

O convert us unto thee, that we may be thankful, humble, and devout; for thou art our salvation, our power, and our strength.

Practical Reflections.

WHEN we perceive within ourselves any feelings of vanity or self-complacency, we need but consider, for one moment, the unfathomable depth of our corruption, and descend into the abyss of our miseries, to stifle them in their very birth. For how can we represent to ourselves, that universal incapacity which we experience for supernatural good our inclination for evil; how violently we are carried towards wickedness, the blindness of our understandings and the malice of our hearts, the fury of our passions, which are always revolting against reason; in a word, how can we consider what we really are and not despise and humble ourselves beneath all creatures? And if we consider ourselves with reference to God; if we reflect what he is, and what we are in his sight, a mere nothing, sinners, but sinners loaded with the numberless crimes we have committed, not knowing whether they have ever been pardoned; creatures so weak and feeble, so inconstant in good and so constant in evil; alas! perhaps in the sight of God, living and dying in the state of sin and

worthy only of his eternal hatred; how, in the midst of such reflections, can we possibly consent to the least thought of vanity? How true it is, that to esteem ourselves is not to know, but to forget, what we are!

Prayer.

SUFFER not pride, O Lord, to deprive us of the sight and conviction of our manifold miseries. Oblige us to do justice to ourselves and to thee, by referring the glory of all things to thee, to whom alone it belongs; and by giving to ourselves nothing but contempt, which is truly our desert and appropriate portion. How does a christian, who knows that all he is, is thine, my Saviour, and that he carries within himself an inexhaustible source of malice and corruption, give thee alone the honor of all the good he may do by the help of thy grace, and attribute nothing to himself but the evil which he commits, since without thee he is incapable of doing any thing but sin! Fill my heart with this true humility without which it is impossible ever to become worthy of thy love. Amen.



Chapter Ninth.

That all things are to be referred to God, as to our last end.

[*Christ.*] I. My son, I must be thy chief and last end, if thou desirest to be truly happy.

By this intention shall thy affection be purified, which too often is irregularly bent upon thyself, and things created.

For if in any thing thou seek thyself, thou presently faintest away within thyself, and growest dry.

Refer therefore all things principally to me, for it is I that have given thee all.

Consider every thing as flowing from the sovereign Good; and therefore they must all be returned to me as to their origin.

II. Out of me, both little and great, rich and poor, as out of a living fountain, draw living water; and they who freely and willingly serve me, shall receive *grace for grace*.

But he that would glory in any thing else besides me, or delight in any good as his own (not referred to me) shall not be re-established in true joy, nor enlarged in his heart, but in many kinds shall meet with perplexities and anguish.

Therefore thou must not ascribe any thing of good to thyself, nor attribute virtue to any man; but give all to God, without whom man is nothing.

I have given all, I will have all returned to me again, and I very strictly require thanks for all that I give.

III. This is that *truth*, by which all *vain glory* is put to flight.

And if heavenly grace and true charity come in, there shall be no envy nor narrowness of heart, nor shall self-love keep its hold.

For divine charity overcomes all, and dilates all the powers of the soul.

If thou art truly wise, thou wilt rejoice in me alone; thou wilt hope in me alone: *for none is good but God alone*, Luke xviii. who is to be praised above all, and to be blessed in all.

Practical Reflections.

LET an upright and pure intention of pleasing God direct all thy actions, and endeavour to give him the whole glory of all the good thou performest, for he is the plenitude and source of all good. Glory only in thy infirmities, and turn them to thy advantage by frequently offering them to the God of all mercy, who is ever well pleased in a soul that is penetrated with a sense of its own nothingness. Dwell not

upon thoughts of vanity and self-complacency, and do not desire to be praised and esteemed by men; for God confounds and despises those who seek to please men and to obtain their praises. The only means by which thou canst please God and gain his love is to despise and to hate thyself.

Prayer.

PERMIT me not, O Lord, to attribute the least good to myself, but to refer all to thee, who alone art the author of every good work. Glory is thy portion, and I will give it wholly and entirely to thee; confusion is mine, and I will accept of it from thy hand; happy if by joyfully resigning myself to contempt, I become worthy of thy favors, and if by living an humble and concealed life I die to myself and to the world, and live only to thee. Amen.



Chapter Tenth.

That it is sweet to serve God, despising this world.

[*Disciple.*] I. NOW will I speak, O Lord, and will not be silent; I will say in the hearing of my God, my Lord, and my King that is on high:

O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for those that fear thee. Ps. xiii.

But what art thou to those that love thee? what to those that serve thee with their whole heart?

Unspeakable indeed is the sweetness of thy contemplation, which thou bestowest on those that love thee.

In this, most of all, hast thou shewed me the sweetness of thy love, that when I had no being, thou hast made me; and when I strayed far from thee, thou hast brought me back again, that I might serve thee; and thou hast commanded me to *love* thee.

II. O Fountain of everlasting love! what shall I say of thee?

How can I ever forget thee, who hast vouchsafed to remember me, ever after that I was corrupted and was lost?

Thou hast beyond all hope shewed mercy to thy servant; and beyond all my desert bestowed thy grace and friendship to me.

What return shall I make to thee for this favor? for it is a favor not granted to all, to forsake all things, and renounce the world, and chuse a monastic life.

Can it be much to serve thee, whom the whole creation is bound to serve.

It ought not seem much to me to serve thee; but this seems rather great and wonderful to me, that thou vouchsafest to re-

ceive one so wretched and unworthy into thy service, and to associate him to thy beloved servants.

III. Behold all things are thine which I have, and with which I serve thee.

Though thou rather servest me, than I thee.

Lo! heaven and earth, which thou hast created for the service of man, are ready at beck, and daily do whatever thou hast commanded them.

And this is yet but little; for thou hast also appointed the angels for the service of man.

But what is above all this is, that thou thyself hast vouchsafed to serve man, and hast promised that thou wilt give him thyself.

IV. What shall I give thee for so many thousands of favors? O that I could serve thee all the days of my life!

O that I were able, if it were but for one day, to serve thee worthily!

Indeed thou art worthy of all service, of all honor, and of eternal praise.

Thou art truly my Lord, and I am thy poor servant, who am bound with all my strength to serve thee, and ought never to grow weary of praising thee.

This is my will, this is my desire; and whatever is wanting to me do thou vouchsafe to supply.

V. It is a great honor, a great glory to serve thee, and to despise all things for thee.

For they who willingly subject themselves to thy most holy service shall have a great grace.

They shall find the most sweet consolation of the Holy Ghost, who for the love of thee have cast away all carnal delight.

They shall gain great freedom of mind, who for thy name enter upon the narrow way and neglect all worldly care.

VI. O pleasant and delightful *service* of God, which makes a man truly free and holy.

O sacred state of religious bondage, which makes men equal to angels, pleasing to God, terrible to the devils, and commendable to all the faithful!

O service worthy to be embraced and always to be wished for, which leads to the supreme Good, and procures a joy that will never end.

Practical Reflections.

To judge ourselves unworthy of every grace; to correspond with those we receive; to refer to God all the glory of our fidelity in his service; often to thank him for his goodness in seeking us when we go astray, and receiving us again after we have sinned; to hope all things from his mercy, and

G

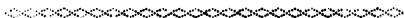
to place ourselves entirely in his hands, is what should be done by every christian soul that knows what Jesus Christ is to it, and what it should be for him.

How fortunate are we in not being able to find in ourselves any real cause for feelings of vanity, or self-complacency, for this obliges us to forsake ourselves, and abide only in God! Ah! how does the sense of our miseries establish us in the heart of the God of mercy! and how does the experience of our inability to do good, and our inclination for evil, oblige us to adhere to God, and to have continual recourse to him!

Prayer.

How can I forget thee, O Lord, who hast so often preserved me from hell, into which I might have precipitated myself by my irregular or useless life? Cure me of that vain complacency and swelling pride which would persuade me that there is something of good in me. It is in thee, O Lord, it is all from thee; for without thee I can do nothing but offend thee. Suffer me not to exalt myself before thee by voluntary pride, lest I draw upon myself the same chastisement with which thou didst visit the first angels. I would rather be despised by men and loved by thee, than be esteemed by them and reprov'd by thee. Grant that I

may do thee justice, by referring all that is good to thee, and to myself nought but the evil I have committed, that I may thus obtain thy merciful pardon. Amen.



Chapter Eleventh.

That the desires of our heart, are to be examined and moderated.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, thou hast many things still to learn, which thou hast not yet well learned.

[*Disciple.*] II. What are these things O Lord?

[*Christ.*] III. That thou conform in all things thy desire to my good pleasure: and that thou be not a lover of thyself; but earnestly zealous that my will may be done.

Desires often inflame thee, and violently hurry thee on: but consider whether it be for my honour or thy own interest that thou art more moved.

If thou hast no other view but me, thou wilt be well contented with whatever I shall ordain: for if there lurk in thee anything of self-seeking, behold this it is that hinders thee, and troubles thee.

IV. Take care then not to rely too much upon any desire which thou hast conceived

before thou hast consulted me, lest afterwards thou repent, or be displeased with that which before pleased thee, and which thou zealously desiredst as the best.

For every inclination which appears good is not presently to be followed: nor every contrary affection at first sight to be rejected.

Even in good desires and inclinations, it is expedient sometimes to use some restraint: lest by too much eagerness thou incur distraction of mind: lest thou create scandal to others, by not keeping within discipline: or by the opposition which thou mayest meet with from others, thou be suddenly disturbed and fall.

V. In some cases thou must use violence, and manfully resist the sensual appetite, and not regard what the flesh has a mind for, or what it would fly from; but rather labour that, whether it will or no, it may become subject to the spirit.

And so long must it be chastised, and kept under servitude, till it readily obey in all things, and learn to be content with a little, and to be pleased with what is plain and ordinary, and not to murmur at any inconvenience.

Practical Reflections.

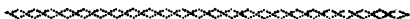
OUR desires should be regulated by the will of God, moderated by the influence of

his grace, and referred to his glory. True mortification of the heart consists in repressing the ardour of our desires, and in directing them all to their proper object, which is God. The holy practice of self-renunciation, which is absolutely necessary for salvation, and which is included in the spirit of the gospel and the engagements of our baptism, consists entirely in repressing our irregular desires, in directing our indifferent or natural inclinations to a supernatural end, and in grounding our hopes of salvation, through the merits of Christ on the fulfilment of our good resolutions.

Prayer.

WHEN, O Lord, shall I become so wearied with my irregular and fruitless desires as to be induced to regulate them by thy holy will, and to practice the good which I desire to perform. Shall I be satisfied with continually saying: I desire earnestly to be all thine, and to serve thee faithfully, without doing it with constancy, or desiring it effectually? Alas! my God, I know that hell is filled with good desires and resolutions, yet still it is hell. Can I be converted and gain salvation by only desiring it, as so many condemned christians have and do still desire it? Root out, O Lord, this inefficacy of my desires, which may lead me to perdi-

tion; and grant that I may ever unite to the desire the use of those means thou affordest me of pleasing thee, and of saving my soul. Amen.



Chapter Twelfth.

Of learning patience, and of fighting against concupiscence.

[*Disciple.*] I. O LORD God, patience, as I perceive, is very necessary for me: this life is exposed to many adversities.

For notwithstanding all I can do to live in peace, my life cannot be without war and sorrow.

[*Christ.*] II. So it is Son: but I would not have thee seek for such a peace, as to be without temptations, or to meet with no adversities.

But even then to think thou hast found peace, when thou shalt be exercised with divers tribulations, and tried in many adversities.

If thou shalt say thou art not able to suffer so much, how then wilt thou endure the fire of purgatory?

Of two evils, one ought always to choose the least.

That thou mayest therefore escape the everlasting punishment to come, labour to endure present evils with patience for God's sake.

Dost thou think the men of this world suffer little or nothing? Thou shalt not find it so, though thou seek out for the most delicate.

III. But thou wilt say they have many delights, and follow their own wills: and therefore make small account of their tribulations.

IV. Suppose it be so, that they have all they desire: how long dost thou think this will last?

Behold, they shall vanish away like smoke that abound in this world, and there shall be no remembrance of their past joys.

Nay, even whilst they are living they enjoy them not without a mixture of bitterness, irksomeness, and fear.

For the very same thing, in which they conceive a delight, doth often bring upon them a punishment of sorrow.

It is but just it should be so with them, that since they inordinately seek and follow their pleasures, they should not satisfy them without confusion and uneasiness.

Oh! how short, how deceitful, how inordinate and filthy are all these pleasures!

Yet through sottishness and blindness men understand this not; but like brute beasts, for a small pleasure in this mortal life, they incur the eternal death of their souls.

But thou, my son, *Go not after thy con-*

cupiscence, but turn away from thy own will.
Ecol. xviii.

Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the desires of thy heart. Ps. xxxvi.

V. For if thou wilt be delighted in truth, and receive more abundant consolation from me; behold in the contempt of all worldly things, and the renouncing all those mean pleasures, thou shalt be blessed, and an exceeding great comfort be derived to thy soul.

And the more thou withdrawest thyself from all comfort of things created, the more sweet and the more powerful consolations wilt thou find in me.

But thou shalt not at first attain to these without some sorrow and labour in the conflict.

The old custom will stand in thy way, but by a better custom it shall be overcome.

The flesh will complain, but by the fervour of the spirit it shall be kept under.

The old serpent will tempt thee and give thee trouble: but by prayer he shall be put to flight: moreover, by keeping thyself always employed in some useful labour, his access to thee shall be in a great measure impeded.

Practical Reflections.

TRUE peace of soul consists in an humble and constant submission to the will of God,

under the severest pains and most violent temptations. When thou findest within thyself nothing but repugnance, trouble, and despondency, it is then that by renouncing thyself, and giving thyself entirely into the hands of God, thou wilt obtain true peace of soul. To separate thyself from every thing pleasing, to accept every thing that is disagreeable as coming from the hand of God, to conquer on all occasions thy repugnance, is the surest way to arrive at true peace.

Prayer.

THOU alone, O Jesus, canst impart to us this interior peace, this peace of God, this ineffable peace, and this humble submission. We ask it of thee and we hope it from thee. Give us this precious gift we beseech thee, which may keep our minds and our hearts in thy faith and love. Amen.



Chapter Thirteenth.

Of the obedience of an humble servant after the example of Jesus Christ.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, he who strives to withdraw himself from obedience, withdraws himself from grace: and he that seeks to have

things for his own particular, loses such as are common.

If a man doth not freely and willingly submit himself to his superior, it is a sign that his flesh is not as yet perfectly obedient to him; but oftentimes rebels and murmurs.

Learn then to submit thyself readily to thy superior, if thou desirest to subdue thy own flesh.

For the enemy without is sooner overcome, if the inward man be not laid waste.

There is no more troublesome or worse enemy to the soul than thou art thyself, when not agreeing well with the spirit.

Thou must in good earnest conceive a true contempt of thyself, if thou wilt prevail over flesh and blood.

Because thou hast yet too inordinate a love for thyself, therefore art thou afraid to resign thyself wholly to the will of others.

II. But what great matter is it, if thou, who art but dust and a mere nothing, submit thyself for God's sake to man: when I the *Almighty*, and the *Most High*, who created all things out of nothing, have, for thy sake, humbly subjected myself to man.

I became the most humble and most abject of all men, that thou mightest learn to overcome thy pride by my humility.

Learn, O dust, to obey, learn to humble thyself, thou that art but dirt and mire, and to cast thyself down under the feet of all men.

Learn to break thy own will, and to yield thyself up to all subjection.

III. Conceive an indignation against thyself; suffer not the swelling of pride to live in thee: but make thyself so submissive and little that all may trample on thee and tread thee under their feet, as the dust of the streets.

What hast thou, vain man, to complain of?

What answer canst thou make, O wretched sinner, to those that reproach thee, that thou hast so often offended God, and many times deserved hell!

But mine eye hath spared thee, because thy soul was precious in my sight, that thou mightest know my love, and mightest be always thankful for my favour, and that thou mightest give thyself continually to true subjection and humility, and bear with patience to be despised by all.

Practical Reflections.

WE must not be satisfied with exteriorly submitting to obedience and in things that are easy, but we must obey with our whole heart, and in things the most difficult. For the greater the difficulty, the greater also is the merit of obedience. Can we refuse to submit to man for God's sake, when God, for love of us, submits even to his very executioners?

Jesus Christ was willingly obedient during his whole life, and even unto the death of the cross; and am I unwilling to spend my life in the exercise of that virtue, and to make it my merit and my cross? Independence belongs to God, who has made man dependant upon others, that his subordination may be to him the means of his sanctification. I will therefore form myself upon the model of my submissive, dependant, and obedient Saviour, and dispose of nothing in myself, not even of my own will.

Prayer.

O MY Saviour, who in obedience to thy Father wast conceived in the womb of Mary, who didst go down to Nazareth and wast subject to thy parents for thirty years, who wouldst be born and live and die in obedience, induce us to follow thy example, to obey thee in all things in the persons of our superiors, who hold thy place in our regard. But grant that, doing willingly what is ordained us and believing it best, our whole lives may be spent in continual obedience, and secure for us thy grace in time, and thy glory for all eternity. Amen.



Chapter Fourteenth.

Of considering the secret judgments of God, lest we be puffed up with our own good works.

[*Disciple.*] I. THOU thunderest forth over my head thy judgments, O Lord, and thou shakest all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is terrified exceedingly.

I stand astonished, and consider that *the heavens are not pure in thy sight.*

If in the angels thou hast found sin and hast not spared them, what will become of me?

Stars have fallen from heaven, and I that am but dust, how can I presume?

They, whose works seemed praiseworthy, have fallen to the very lowest; and such as before fed upon the bread of angels, I have seen delighted with the husks of swine.

II. There is then no sanctity, if thou, O Lord, withdraw thy hand.

No wisdom avails, if thou cease to govern us.

No strength is of any help, if thou support us not.

No chastity is secure, without thy protection.

No guard that we can keep upon ourselves

will profit us, if thy holy providence watch not over us.

For if we are left to ourselves, we sink and we perish ; but if thou visit us, we are raised up and we live.

For we are unsettled, but by thee we are strengthened : we are tepid, but by thee we are inflamed.

III. O how humble and lowly ought I to think of myself : how little ought I to esteem whatever good I may seem to have.

Oh ! how low ought I to cast myself down under the bottomless depths of thy judgments, O Lord : where I find myself to be *nothing* else but *nothing* !

Oh ! immense weight ! Oh ! sea that cannot be passed over, where I find nothing of myself but altogether nothing !

Where then can there be any reason for glorying in myself ? where any confidence in any conceit of my own virtue ?

All vain glory is swallowed up in the depth of thy judgments over me.

IV. What is all flesh in thy sight ?

Shall the clay glory against him that formed it ?

How can he be puffed up with the vain talk of men, whose heart in *truth* is subjected to God ?

All the world will not move him whom *truth* hath established in humility.

Neither will he be moved with the tongues

of all that praise him, who hath settled his whole hope in God.

For behold, they also that speak are all *nothing*, for they shall pass away with the sound of their words: but *the Truth of the Lord remaineth for ever*. Ps. xcvi.

Practical Reflections.

THE contemplation of the holiness and purity of God, in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and the conviction of our own sinfulness and corruption, should stifle in us every rising sentiment of pride. An angel sins and God cannot endure him; he rejects him and casts him off for ever. Man sins and he bears with him; he offers him his mercy, and opens to him the gates of heaven. In the fallen angels we behold the horrid nature of sin, and the awful character of God's justice: in the redeeming love of Jesus we are invited to confide entirely in his tender mercy: from both we derive motives of a speedy conversion from sin, to awaken our gratitude, and to animate us to a life of holiness.

Prayer.

O GOD of sanctity! who canst not endure iniquity, how canst thou endure me, an unworthy sinner, who am committing iniquity

without ceasing, and am continually displeasing thee! O God of purity! before whom the heavens are not clean, and who didst discover corruption even in the angels! why dost thou not reject me who am nought but defilement and sin! Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean. I cast myself upon thy mercy, and conjure thee to enable me to correct and to punish all my sins, and to destroy within me every thing that is contrary to thy infinite sanctity Amen.



Chapter Fifteenth

How we are to be disposed, and what we are to say when we desire anything.

[*Christ.*] I. MY SON, say this on every occasion: Lord, if it be pleasing to thee, let this be done in this manner.

Lord, if it be to thy honour, let this be done in thy name.

Lord if thou seest that this is expedient, and approvest it as profitable for me, then grant that I may use it to thy honour.

But if thou knowest that it will be hurtful to me, and not expedient for the salvation of my soul, take away from me such a desire.

For every desire is not from the Holy Ghost, though it seem to a man right and good.

And it is sometimes hard to judge duly, whether it be a good or bad spirit that urges thee on to desire this or that: or whether thou art not moved to it by thy own spirit.

Many in the end have been deceived, who at first seemed to be led by a good spirit.

II. Whatsoever therefore presents itself to thy mind, as worthy to be desired, see that it be always with the fear of God, and humility of heart, that thou desire or ask for it.

And above all, thou oughtest with a resignation of thyself, to commit all to me, and to say,

Thou knowest, O Lord, what is best: let this or that be done, as thou wilt.

Give what thou wilt, how much thou wilt, and at what time thou wilt.

Do with me as thou knowest, and as best pleaseth thee, and is most for thy honour.

Put me where thou wilt, and do with me in all things according to thy will.

Lo, I am thy servant, ready to obey thee in all things; for I do not desire to live for myself, but for thee: O that I could do so, after a faithful and perfect manner.

A PRAYER.

For the fulfilling the will of God.

[*Disciple.*] III. Grant me thy grace, most merciful Jesus, that it may be with me, and continue with me to the end.

Grant me always to will and desire that which is most acceptable to thee, and which pleaseth thee best.

Let thy will be mine, and let my will always follow thine, and agree perfectly with it.

Let me always will or not will the same with thee: and let me not be able to will or not will any otherwise than as thou wilt or wilt not.

IV. Grant that I may die to all things that are in the world: and for thy sake love to be despised, and not to be known in this world.

Grant that I may rest in thee above all things desired, and that my heart may be at peace in thee.

Thou art the true peace of the heart, thou art its only rest: out of thee all things are hard and uneasy.

In this peace, in the self-same, that is in thee, the one sovereign eternal Good, I will sleep and take my rest. Amen. Ps. iv.

Practical Reflections.

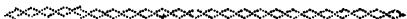
As it is God who wills all that happens to us, and wills it for our good, for our salvation, so we ought in all things to resign ourselves to his holy appointments, that is, we should: 1st. Will only what God wills, and when he wills it. 2dly. We should never separate our will from his by any volun-

tary transgression, and never say or do any thing contrary to it. 3dly. We should never knowingly sin, or resist God in what he requires from us.

A firm and constant resolution to do, to renounce and to suffer whatever he at present requires, or may in future demand of our fidelity, is all that is necessary to make us victims of his love and good pleasure, and to commence here upon earth what we hope to continue in heaven. Wherefore let us often pray that the will of God may be accomplished in us in time as well as in eternity.

Prayer.

O MY God, whose holy will is the rule and principle of all good, mayest thou be the soul of all my actions, and the object of all the motions of my heart. Grant that in my whole conduct, and in all trials, I may seek only to do and to suffer whatever thou wilt, because it is thy will, and as thou pleasest; that I may renounce my own will in every thing; that I may make thee the sole master and proprietor of my heart, that in all things it may be submissive to thy will, and never depart from it. Amen.



Chapter Sixteenth.

That true comfort is to be sought in God alone.

[*Disciple.*] I. WHATSOEVER I can desire or imagine for my comfort, I look not for it in this life but hereafter.

For if I alone should have all the comforts of this world, and might enjoy all its delights, it is certain they could not last long.

Wherefore thou canst not, O my soul, be fully comforted, nor perfectly delighted, but in God, the Comforter of the poor, and the Support of the humble.

Expect a little while, my soul, wait for the divine promise, and thou wilt have plenty of all that is good in heaven.

If thou desirest too inordinately these present things, thou wilt lose those that are heavenly and everlasting.

Let temporal things serve thy use, but the eternal be the object of thy desire.

Thou canst not be fully satisfied with any temporal good, because thou wast not created for the enjoyment of such things.

II. Although thou shouldst have all created goods, yet this could not make thee happy and blessed: but in God, who created all things, all thy beatitude and happiness consists

Not such a happiness as is seen or cried up by the foolish admirers of this world, but such as good christians look for, and of which they that are spiritual and clean of heart, whose conversation is in heaven, have sometimes a foretaste.

All human comfort is vain and short.

Blessed and true is that comfort which is inwardly received from *truth*.

A devout man always carries about him Jesus his Comforter, and saith to him, be with me, O Lord Jesus, in all places and at all times.

Let this be my consolation, to be willing to want all human comfort.

And if thy comfort also be withdrawn, let thy will and just appointment for my trial be to me as the greatest of comforts.

For thou wilt not be with me always, neither wilt thou threaten for ever. Ps. cii.

Practical Reflections.

God is the centre of our hearts, says St. Augustin, and we cannot rest till we rest in him; that is, so long as we are attached to ourselves and to creatures, we seek happiness where it is not to be found, out of God. We should therefore withdraw our hearts from all that is not God, and die to all things else, if we would enjoy that true happiness which can only result from an entire dedica-

tion of our souls to God. Wherefore let us not say with those of the world: happy they who possess abundance of all things they desire, and want none of the goods and pleasures of the earth! Rather let us say, blessed is the heart for which God sufficeth! happy the christian who loves that only now which he shall love for ever.

Prayer.

WHEN, O God, shall I become so detached from created objects as to sigh only for the happiness of pleasing and loving thee? When wilt thou become more to me than all things else, all in all, even as thou art to the blessed in heaven? Grant that I may deny myself every gratification, and delight only in pleasing thee. Pains, crosses and afflictions, shall be from henceforth the joy of my soul, or at least the subjects of my patience, because they have been consecrated by thee, my Jesus! and it is thy blessed will I should endure them. And if, as I deserve, thou deprivest me of consolation, grant that humble submission may support me whilst thou hidest the light of thy countenance. Amen.

Chapter Seventeenth.

That we ought to cast all our care upon God.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, suffer me to do with thee what I will: I know what is best for thee.

Thou thinkest as man; thou judgest in many things as human affection suggests.

[*Disciple.*] II. Lord, what thou sayest is true; thy care over me is greater than all the care I can take of myself.

For he stands at too great a hazard that does not cast his whole care on thee.

Lord, provided that my will remain but right and firm towards thee, do with me whatsoever it shall please thee.

For it cannot but be good, whatever thou shalt do by me.

If thou wilt have me to be in darkness, be thou blessed: and if thou wilt have me to be in light, be thou again blessed: if thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be thou blessed: and if it be thy will I should be afflicted, be thou always equally blessed.

[*Christ.*] III. Son, it is in this manner thou must stand affected, if thou desire to walk with me.

Thou must be as ready to suffer, as to re-

joice: thou must be as willing to be poor and needy, as to be full and rich.

[*Disciple.*] IV. Lord, I will suffer willingly for thee whatsoever thou art pleased should befall me.

I will receive with indifference from thy hand good and evil, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow; and will give thee thanks for all that happens to me.

Keep me only from all sin, and I will fear neither death nor hell.

Cast me not off for ever, nor blot me out of the book of life; and what tribulation soever befall me shall not hurt me.

Practical Reflections.

To preserve peace in time of trouble, our will must remain firm in God, and be ever directed towards him; that is, we should be disposed to receive all things from the hand of God, from his justice, and from his bounty, with humble submission to his blessed will. Good and evil, health and sickness, prosperity and adversity, consolation and dryness, temptation and tranquility, interior sweetness, trials and chastisements, all should be received by the soul with humility, patience, and resignation, as coming to us by the appointment of God. This is the only means of finding peace in the midst of great troubles and adversities.

Prayer.

GRANT, O God, that I may rely entirely on thy power and goodness. Thou canst and wilt assist me: this shall be my support and confidence in the midst of the most grievous afflictions. Keep me from sin, and I am content to suffer all things else. Am I assailed by most violent temptations, do I feel myself almost yielding to them, and as it were in the midst of the shadow of death, I will cast my whole self upon thee, and fear no evil, because thou wilt be with me. All I ask, O God! is that my trials may be as pleasing to thee as they are painful to me, that by patient endurance, they may become to me the way of penance, and conduct me to salvation. Amen.


Chapter Eighteenth.

That temporal miseries are to be borne with patience, after the example of Jesus Christ.

[Christ.] I, SON, I came down from heaven for thy salvation, I took upon me thy miseries, not of necessity, but moved thereto by charity, that thou mightest learn patience, and mightest bear without repining the miseries of this life.

For from the hour of my birth, till my expiring on the cross, I was never without suffering.

I underwent a great want of temporal things: I frequently heard many complaints against me: I meekly bore with confusion and reproaches; for my benefits, I received ingratitude: for my miracles, blasphemies: and for my heavenly doctrine, reproaches.

[*Disciple.*] II. Lord, because thou wast patient in thy life-time, in this chiefly fulfilling the commandment of thy Father, it is fitting that I, a wretched sinner, should according to thy will, take all with patience; and, as long as thou pleasest, support the burden of this corruptible life, in order to my salvation.

For though this present life be burthensome, yet it is now become, through thy grace, very meritorious; and by the help of thy example and the footsteps of thy saints, more supportable to the weak, and more lightsome.

It is also much more comfortable than it was formerly under the old law, when the gate of heaven remained shut; and the way to heaven seemed more obscure, when few concerned themselves to seek the kingdom of heaven,

Neither could they who were then just and to be saved, enter into thy heavenly kingdom, before thy passion, and the payment of our debt by thy sacred death.

III. O ! how great thanks am I obliged to return to thee, for having vouchsafed to shew me and all the faithful a right and good way to an everlasting kingdom !

For thy life is our way : and by holy patience we walk on to thee, who art our crown.

If thou hadst not gone before and instructed us, who would have cared to have followed ?

Alas ! how many would have staid afar off, and a great way behind, if they had not before their eyes thy excellent example ?

Behold we are still tepid, notwithstanding all the miracles and instructions we have heard : what then would it have been, if we had not this great light to follow thee ?

Practical Reflections.

To animate ourselves to suffer in a proper manner, we should often think of the passion of Jesus Christ, who suffered the punishment due to our sins. The afflictions which God sends us are intended either to prove our fidelity, or to punish us for our offences. We should therefore receive them with humble submission, and in a truly penitential spirit ; happy in being allowed to satisfy the justice of God in time, that we may contemplate his bounty for eternity. Our greatest trials are from ourselves. The rebellions of our passions, the bitterness of our hearts,

our constitutional fretfulness, the wanderings of our imagination, and the whole man so opposite to God, would be insupportable, did we not frequently think of the patience with which God waits for us, and endeavour to imitate him who bears with our infirmities. Let us then be patient under sufferings, that so, at the last hour, we may enjoy the consolation of having sanctified the evils of this life by a spirit of penance, and thus rendered them most available to salvation.

Prayer.

CAN we behold thee, O Jesus, suffer so much for us and yet be unwilling to suffer anything for thee? Can we believe that we must suffer with thee on earth, if we would reign with thee in heaven, and yet resist thy chastisements or bear them with impatience? Dearest Saviour, give us strength to suffer, and grant that the patience which thou impartest to us, may make us worthy of those eternal rewards, which thou hast promised us in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

Chapter Nineteenth.

Of supporting injuries ; and who is proved to be truly patient.

[*Christ.*] I. WHAT is it thou sayest my son ? Cease to complain, considering my passion, and that of other saints.

Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood.

What thou sufferest is but little, in comparison of them who have suffered so much : who have been so strongly tempted, so grievously afflicted, so many ways tried and exercised.

Thou must then call to mind the heavy sufferings of others, that thou mayest the easier bear the little things thou sufferest.

And if to thee they seem not little, take heed lest this also proceed from thy impatience.

But whether they be little or great, strive to bear them all with patience.

II. The better thou disposest thyself for suffering, the more wisely dost thou act, and more dost thou merit : and thou wilt bear it more easily, thy mind being well prepared for it, and accustomed to it.

Do not say, I cannot take these things from such a man, and things of this kind are

not to be suffered by me, for he has done me a great injury, and he upbraids me with things I never thought on ; but I will suffer willingly from another, and as far as I shall judge fitting for me to suffer.

Such a thought is foolish, which considers not the virtue of patience, nor by whom it shall be crowned ; but rather weighs the persons, and the offences committed.

III. He is not a truly patient man, who will suffer no more than he thinks good, and from whom he pleaseth.

The true patient man minds not by whom it is he is exercised, whether by his superior, or by one of his equals, or by an inferior ; whether by a good and holy man, or by one that is perverse and unworthy.

But how much soever and how often soever any adversity happens to him from any thing created, he takes it all with equality of mind, as from the hand of God, with thanksgiving, and esteems it a great gain.

For nothing, how little soever, that is suffered for God's sake, can pass without merit in the sight of God.

IV. Be thou therefore ready prepared to fight, if thou desirest to gain the victory.

Without fighting thou canst not obtain the crown of patience.

If thou wilt not suffer, thou refuseth to be crowned ; but if thou desirest to be crowned, fight manfully, and endure patiently.

Without labour there is no coming to rest, nor without fighting, can the victory be obtained.

[*Disciple.*] V. May thy grace, O Lord, make that possible to me, which seems impossible to me by nature.

Thou knowest that I can bear but little, and that I am quickly cast down by a small adversity.

Let all exercises of tribulation become amiable and agreeable to me, for thy name's sake; for to suffer and to be afflicted for thee is very healthful for my soul.

Practical Reflections.

THE practice of patience consists 1st, in receiving all misfortunes as coming from the hand of God; 2ndly, in bearing all things with resignation; 3rdly, in never murmuring under contradictions; 4thly, in believing that having deserved hell, no one can do us wrong or injustice; 5thly, in complaining only of ourselves; 6thly, in not speaking when the heart is full; 7thly, in thanking God for evil as well as for good; in a word, in frequently saying, with holy Job: *the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be his holy name.* Such is the practice of patience, which is so necessary for salvation, and yet so rare among christians; for although there is no one but what suffers much, yet very few suffer as they ought.

Long and constant patience in our trials and difficulties, is a penitential and powerful means of effacing sin, which God never punishes twice; when he punishes it in this life, we may be assured he will not punish it in the next.

Prayer.

GRANT, O my Saviour, that thy patience in suffering for me, may be the model and principle of my patience in suffering for thee; and that, entering into thy designs for my salvation, which thou wouldst secure for me by the good use I make of afflictions, I may receive all things with humble submission to thy holy will. Amen.



Chapter Twentieth.

Of the confession of our own infirmity, and of the misery of this life.

[Disciple.] I. *I WILL confess against myself my injustice.* Ps. xxxi. I will confess to thee, O Lord, my infirmity.

It is oftentimes a small thing which casts me down and troubles me.

I make a resolution to behave myself valiantly; but when a small temptation comes, I am brought into great straits.

It is sometimes a very trifling thing from whence proceeds a grievous temptation.

And when I think myself somewhat safe, I find myself sometimes, when I least apprehend it, almost overcome with a small blast.

II. Behold, then, O Lord, my abjection and frailty, every way known to thee.

Have pity on me, and draw me out of the mire, that I stick not fast therein, that I may not be utterly cast down for ever.

This it is which often drives me back, and confounds me in thy sight, to find that I am so subject to fall, and have so little strength to resist my passions.

And although I do not altogether consent, yet their assaults are troublesome and grievous to me: and it is exceeding irksome to me to live thus always in a conflict.

From hence my infirmity is made known to me: because wicked thoughts do always much more easily rush in upon me, than they can be cast out again.

III. O! that thou, the most mighty God of Israel, the zealous lover of faithful souls, wouldst behold the labour and sorrow of thy servant, and stand by me in all my undertakings.

Strengthen me with heavenly fortitude, lest the old man, the miserable flesh not fully subject to the spirit, prevail and get the upper hand, against which we must fight as long as we breathe in this most wretched life

H

Alas! what kind of life is this, where afflictions and miseries are never wanting; where all things are full of snares and enemies?

For when one tribulation or temptation is gone, another cometh: yea, and whilst the first conflict lasteth, many others come on, and those unexpected.

IV. How can a life be loved that hath so great a bitterness, that is subject to so many calamities and miseries?

How can it be called life, since it begets so many deaths and plagues?

And yet it is loved, and many seek their delight in it.

Many blame the world that it is deceitful and vain, yet they are not willing to quit it, because the concupiscence of the flesh too much prevails.

But there are some things that draw them to love the world,—others to despise it.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life, draw to the love of the world; but the pains and miseries, which justly follow these things breed a hatred and loathing of the world.

V. But, alas! the pleasures of sin prevail over the worldly soul, and under these thorns she imagines there are delights: because she has neither seen nor tasted the sweetness of God, nor the internal pleasure of virtue.

But they that perfectly despise the world, and study to live to God under holy disci-

pline, experience the divine sweetness that is promised for those who forsake all: and such clearly see how grievously the world is mistaken, and how many ways it is imposed upon.

Practical Reflections,

It is not sufficient to know and to feel our weaknesses and miseries, and our continual danger of perishing eternally, by yielding to our passions: we should also at the sight of them, humble ourselves before God, and place our whole confidence in him. We should incessantly bewail our exile, and cast and support ourselves upon the bounty of God. We should never remain in the state of sin, tepidity, or infidelity, in which our weakness too often engages us, but immediately arise after we have fallen, and speedily return to our Heavenly Father, when we find we have gone astray.

This life is so replete with temptations, pains and miseries, that it becomes insupportable to a soul that loves God, and is afraid of offending him. How shall I live, does it exclaim, and not sin, yet how shall I sin and still live? to be ever falling, and then rising again; ever resisting my passions and fighting against the irregular desires of my heart, is this life? It is continual death. But let us not grow weary of repressing, of fighting, and conquering our

predominant passions, for in this consists the merit of a supernatural life, of a life conducting to eternal happiness.

Prayer.

I ACKNOWLEDGE, O God, that life would be unsatisfactory, had I no trial of suffering for thy sake. Grant, therefore, that when weary of myself, and fatigued with the miseries of this life, I may commit them all to thy most merciful providence. Support me by thy bounty, and give me patience and fidelity to endure and to suffer whatever thou shalt appoint. Amen.



Chapter Twenty-first.

That we are to rest in God above all goods and gifts.

[*Disciple.*] I. ABOVE all things, and in all things, do thou, my soul, rest always in the Lord, for he is the eternal rest of the saints.

Give me, O most sweet and loving Jesus, to repose in thee above all things created; above all health and beauty, above all glory and honour, above all power and dignity, above all knowledge and subtlety, above all riches and arts, above all joy and gladness, above all fame and praise, above all sweet-

ness and consolation, above all hope and promise, above all merit and desire, above all the gifts and presents that thou canst give and infuse, above all the joy and jubilation that the mind can contain and experience; in fine, above angels and archangels, and all the host of heaven; above all things visible and invisible, and above all that which is less than thee, my God!

II. For thou, O Lord my God! art the best above all things. Thou alone most high; thou alone most powerful; thou alone most sufficient and most full; thou alone most sweet and most comfortable.

Thou alone most beautiful and most loving; thou alone most noble and most glorious above all things; in whom all things are found together in all their perfection, and always have been and always will be.

And therefore whatever thou bestowest upon me, that is not thyself; or whatever thou revealest to me concerning thyself, or promisest, as long as I see thee not, nor fully enjoy thee, is too little and insufficient.

Because indeed my heart can not truly rest, nor be entirely contented, till it rest in thee, and rise above all thy gifts, and all things created.

III. O my most beloved Spouse, Christ Jesus, most pure Lover, Lord of the whole creation; who will give me the wings of true liberty, to fly and repose in thee? Oh when

shall it be fully granted me to attend at leisure, and see how sweet thou art, O Lord my God!

When shall I fully recollect myself in thee, that through the love of thee I may not feel myself, but thee alone, above all feeling and measure, in a manner not known to all?

But now I often sigh, and bear my misfortune with grief.

Because I meet with many evils in this vale of miseries, which frequently disturb me, afflict me, and cast a cloud over me; often hinder, and distract me, allure and entangle me, that I cannot have free access to thee, nor enjoy thy sweet embraces, which are ever enjoyed by blessed spirits.

Let my sighs move thee, and this manifold desolation under which I labour upon earth.

IV. O Jesus, the brightness of eternal glory, the comfort of a soul in its pilgrimage; my tongue cannot express the sentiments of my heart; but my silence itself speaks to thee.

How long doth my Lord delay to come. Let him come to me, his poor servant, and make me joyful: let him stretch forth his hand, and deliver me, a wretch from all anguish.

Come; for without thee I can never have one joyful day nor hour, for thou art my joy; and without thee my table is empty.

I am miserable, and in a manner imprisoned, and loaded with fetters: till thou comfort

me with the light of thy presence, and restore me to liberty, and shew me a favourable countenance.

V. Let others seek, instead of thee, whatever else they please: nothing else doth please me, or shall please me, but thou my God, my hope, my eternal salvation.

I will not hold my peace, nor cease to pray: till thy grace returns, and thou speak to me interiorly.

VI. Behold here I am: behold I come to thee, because thou hast called upon me.

Thy tears, and the desire of thy soul, thy humiliation and contrition of heart, have inclined and brought me to thee.

VII. And I said, O Lord, I have called upon thee, and have desired to enjoy thee, and am ready to renounce all other things for thee.

For thou didst first stir me up, that I might seek thee.

Be thou therefore blessed O Lord, who hast shewed this goodness to thy servant, according to the multitude of thy mercies.

What hath thy servant more to say in thy presence, but to humble himself exceedingly before thee; always remembering his own iniquity and vileness.

For there is none like to thee, amongst all things that are wonderful in heaven or on earth.

Thy works are exceedingly good, thy judg-

ments are true, and by thy providence all things are ruled.

Praise therefore and glory be to thee, O Wisdom of the Father! let my tongue, my soul, and all things created, join in praising and blessing thee.

Practical Reflections.

WE should prefer God before all things; that is, we should labour to forsake and renounce ourselves in all things, die to all self-satisfaction, deny ourselves many lawful pleasures, and punish ourselves for having indulged in those which are criminal. We should submit, give up, and immolate ourselves to God, rise superior to all created things, direct our hearts towards him, and lose ourselves in his perfections; keep ourselves in a state of sovereign and interior adoration, to which all should yield; and by our actions, by the sacrifice of every thing that is dear to us, establish him the absolute master and God of our souls. To love God so as to delight only in him, is indeed a heaven upon earth, and as it were a foretaste of a happy eternity; but to arrive at this, we must disengage ourselves from those amusements of the mind, which dissipate and withdraw it from God, and from those attachments of the heart which bind it to creatures; that so the soul being free from itself and from the servitude of the passions may take

the wings of the dove and fly away towards God, to repose in him alone.

Prayer.

My God, my sovereign good and only consolation ! how dare I raise myself towards thee, draw thee to myself, and firmly unite myself to thee, I who am filled, penetrated, and loaded with so many miseries, irregular inclinations towards evil, and continual repugnance to good ; I who am every moment flying from thee to myself and from myself into sin ; in a word, I who meet with so many obstacles within myself, which like a wall of separation, would hinder me from being united to thee ? But what, O Lord, is impossible to me, is easy to thee ; in thy power and bounty I place all my hopes. Thou knowest my condition, and if thou wilt thou canst assist me. I groan incessantly under the load of my infirmities. I address myself to thee to be delivered from them by thy mercy. I find no rest, content, or happiness, but in and by thee. Come then, O God, give consolation and support to my soul which desires only thee, to live only by and for its God. I languish and am on fire with the desire of possessing thee without the fear of ever losing thee. Reject me not, O infinitely amiable God ! for I can no longer live separated and removed at a distance from thee. Amen.

Chapter Twenty-second.

Of the remembrance of the manifold benefits of God.

[*Disciple.*] I. OPEN, O Lord, my heart in thy law, and teach me to walk in thy commandments.

Give me grace to understand thy will, and to commemorate, with great reverence and diligent consideration, all thy benefits, as well in general as in particular: that so I may be able worthily to give thee thanks for them. But I know and confess that I am not able to return thee due thanks, not even for the least point.

I am less than any of thy benefits bestowed upon me: and when I consider thy excellency, my spirit loses itself in the greatness of thy Majesty.

II. All that we have in soul and body, all that we possess outwardly or inwardly, by nature or grace, are thy benefits, and commend thy bounty, mercy and goodness, from whom we have received all good.

And though one has received more, another less, yet all is thine, and without thee even the least cannot be had.

He that has received greater things cannot glory in his own merit, nor extol himself



above others, nor insult over the lesser; because he is indeed greater and better who attributes less to himself, and is more humble and devout in returning thanks.

And he who esteems himself the vilest of men, and judges himself the most unworthy, is fittest to receive the greatest blessings.

III. But he that has received fewer must not be troubled, nor take it ill, nor envy him that is more enriched; but attend rather to thee, and very much praise thy goodness, for that thou bestowest thy gifts so plentifully; so freely and willingly, without respect to persons.

All things are from thee, and therefore thou art to be praised in all.

Thou knowest what is fit to be given to every one; and why this person hath less, and the other more, is not our business to decide, but thine, who keepest an exact account of the merits of each one.

IV. Wherefore, O Lord God, I take it for a great benefit, not to have much, which outwardly and according to men might appear praise-worthy and glorious: so that a person, considering his own poverty and meanness, ought not upon that account to be weighed down, or to be grieved and dejected, but rather to receive comfort and great pleasure.

Because thou, O God, hast chosen the poor and the humble, and those that are despised by this world, for thy familiar friends and domestics.

Witness thy apostles themselves, whom thou didst appoint rulers over all the earth.

And yet they conversed in this world without complaint, so humble and simple, without any malice or guile, that they were even glad when they suffered affronts and reproaches for thy name: and what the world flies from, they embraced with great affection.

V. Nothing therefore ought to give so great joy to him that loves thee, and knows thy benefits, as the accomplishment of thy will in himself, and the pleasure of thy eternal appointment.

With which he ought to be so far contented and comforted, as to be as willing to be the least, as any one would wish to be the greatest: and to enjoy as much peace and content in the lowest place, as in the highest: and to be as willing to be despicable and mean, and of no name and repute in the world, as to be preferred in honour, and greater than others.

For thy will and the love of thy honour, ought to be regarded above all, and to comfort and please him more than any benefits whatsoever, which he hath received, or can receive.

Practical Reflections.

HAPPY the soul that is little in its own eyes, and is as content to be below all men, as

others are desirous to be above them ; whose merit and happiness consist in being unknown, abject and despised, and which longs as ardently to become the reproach and the outcast of the world, as others do to be esteemed and honoured by it. Such a soul is the delight of God's own heart ; it is great in the eyes of his majesty, and by its humility, renders itself worthy of his greatest graces. To arrive at this degree of perfection, we must love an abject and hidden life, do nothing for the sake of esteem or praise, cheerfully receive contempt and adversity as our due ; accept with humble submission, blame, contradiction, and calumny, and nourish ourselves with reproaches in imitation of Jesus Christ ; esteeming it our greatest honour thus to resemble him.

Prayer.

WHEN, O my Saviour, shall the esteem of men and the honour of the world, become, as they ought to be, the disdain and dread of my soul : humiliation and contempt, its joy and delight ? Grant that the love which thou hadst for contempt, thou who art the adoration of the angels, may be the motive and the rule of my patience in bearing with it, who have deserved to become the eternal object of thy hatred and malediction. Amen.

Chapter Twenty-third.

Of four things which bring much peace.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, I will teach thee now the way of peace and true liberty.

[*Disciple.*] II. Do, Lord, I beseech thee, as thou sayest, for I shall be very glad to hear it.

[*Christ.*] III. Endeavour, my son, rather to do the will of another, than thy own.

Ever choose rather to have less, than more.

Always seek the lowest place, and to be inferior to every one.

Always wish and pray that the will of God may be entirely fulfilled in thee.

Behold such a man as this enters upon the coasts of peace and rest.

[*Disciple.*] IV. Lord, this thy short speech contains much perfection.

It is short in words: but full in sense and plentiful in its fruit.

For if I could faithfully observe it, I should not be so easily troubled.

For as often as I find myself disquieted and disturbed, I am sensible it is because I have strayed from this doctrine.

But thou, O Lord, who canst do all things, and always lovest the progress of the soul,

increase in me thy grace, that I may accomplish this thy word, and perfect my salvation.

A PRAYER

Against evil Thoughts.

V. O Lord, my God, depart not far from me, O my God, have regard to help me, for divers evil thoughts have risen up against me, and great fears, afflicting my soul.

How shall I pass without hurt? How shall I break through them?

[*Christ.*] VI. *I will go before thee and will humble the great ones of the earth.*
Isa. xxv.

I will open the gates of the prison, and reveal to thee hidden secrets.

[*Disciple.*] VII. Do, Lord, as thou sayest: and let all these wicked thoughts flee from before thy face.

This is my hope and my only comfort, to fly to thee in all tribulations; to confide in thee, to call on thee from my heart, and patiently to look for thy consolation.

A PRAYER

For enlightening of the Mind.

VIII. Enlighten me, O good Jesus, with the brightness of eternal light: and cast out all darkness from the dwelling of my heart.

Restrain my many wandering thoughts; and suppress the temptations that violently assault me.

Fight strongly for me, and overcome these wicked beasts, I mean these alluring concupiscences, that peace may be made in thy power, and the abundance of thy praise may resound in thy holy court, which is a clean conscience.

Command the winds and storms: say to the sea, be thou still, and to the north wind, blow thou not: and a great calm shall ensue.

IX. Send forth thy light and thy truth, that they may shine upon the earth: for I am an earth that is empty and void, till thou enlightenest me. Gen. i.

Pour forth thy grace from above, water my heart with the dew of heaven: send down the waters of devotion, to wash the face of the earth, to bring forth good and perfect fruit.

Lift up my mind, oppressed with the load of sins, and raise my whole desire towards heavenly things, that having tasted the sweetness of the happiness above, I may have no pleasure in thinking of the things of the earth.

X. Draw me away, and deliver me from all unstable comfort of creatures; for no created thing can fully quiet and satisfy my desire.

Join me to thyself by an inseparable bond of love: for thou alone canst satisfy the lover, and without thee all other things are frivolous.

Practical Reflections.

As no one can escape the sight nor the justice of God, so we should, in the 1st place, keep a continual watch over ourselves; 2ndly, we should never allow ourselves anything that may displease God; 3rdly, we should walk always in his presence, and do all things with an intention of pleasing him, follow on all occasions the motions of his grace, never resist his holy will, nor defer its accomplishment for one moment; so that there may be no interval between our knowing, willing, and performing what he requires of us. Nothing is so agreeable to God as to confide in him, to trust in all things to him, to abandon ourselves entirely to him, and to depend completely upon him. Happy the soul which, receiving all from his hands, resigns itself in all things to his holy will, wills only what he wills, and wills all that happens to it, because he so ordains it.

Prayer.

EACH day, do I ask of thee, O Lord, that thy will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Hearken to my prayer, I beseech thee, and grant that I may perform all my actions in compliance with thy holy will, and ever make it the sole rule of my conduct. Deliver

my soul from the slavery of its passions. Grant that they may all become subject to thy empire, and that I may cherish no other predominant passion than to please and to love thee. Amen.



Chapter Twenty-fourth.

That we are not to be curious in inquiring into the lives of others.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, be not curious, and give not way to useless cares.

What is this or that to thee? Do thou follow me.

For what is it to thee, whether this man be such, or such; or that man do or say this, or the other.

Thou art not to answer for others, but must give an account for thyself: why therefore dost thou meddle with them.

Behold, I know every one, and see all things that are done under the sun: and I know how it is with every one, what he thinks, what he would have, and at what his intention aims.

All things therefore are to be committed to me; but as for thy part, keep thyself in good peace, and let the busy body be as busy as he will.

Whatsoever he shall do or say, will come upon himself, because he cannot deceive me.

II. Be not solicitous for the shadow of a great name; neither seek to be familiarly acquainted with many, nor to be particularly loved by men.

For these things beget distractions, and great darkness in the heart.

I would willingly speak my word to thee, and reveal my secrets to thee, if thou wouldst diligently observe my coming, and open to me the door of thy heart.

Be careful and watch in prayers, and humble thyself in all things.

Practical Reflections.

IN order to enjoy true peace, we must in the first place, avoid all curiosity as to what regards our neighbour; 2ndly, we must receive with patience all the afflictions which arise either from the justice of God, or the injustice of man; 3rdly, we must suffer and accustom ourselves to the privation of all joy and consolation; sacrifice to God all the pleasures of our mind, heart and senses, and thank him for not permitting us to find any real satisfaction but in him.

Prayer.

I ACKNOWLEDGE, O God, that my only desire and the only curiosity of my mind is

to know whether I am at present in the state of grace, and whether I shall so continue until death; whether thou hast pardoned me my sins, and whether thou wilt grant me the greatest of all thy mercies, final perseverance. But I will resign this desire to thee, I will sacrifice this security, and will hope from thy pure bounty, this greatest of all graces. Amen.



Chapter Twenty-fifth.

In what things the firm peace of the heart and true progress doth consist.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, I have said, *Peace I leave to you, my peace I give to you: not as the world giveth, do I give to you.* John xiv.

Peace is what all desire; but all care not for those things which appertain to true *peace*.

My *peace* is with the humble and meek of heart. Thy *peace* shall be in much patience.

If thou wilt hear me, and follow my voice, thou wilt enjoy much patience.

[*Disciple.*] II. What then shall I do, Lord?

[*Christ.*] III. In every thing attend to thyself, what thou art doing, and what thou art saying: and direct thy whole intention to this, that thou mayest please me alone, and neither desire nor seek any thing out of me.

And as for the sayings or doings of others, judge of nothing rashly; neither busy thyself with things not committed to thy care; and thus may it be brought about that thou shalt be little or seldom disturbed.

But never to feel any trouble at all, nor to suffer any grief of heart or body, is not the state of this present life, but of everlasting rest.

Think not therefore that thou hast found true peace, if thou feelest no burden; nor that then all is well, if thou have no adversary; nor that thou hast attained to perfection, if all things be done according to thy inclination.

Neither do thou conceive a great opinion of thyself, or imagine thyself to be especially beloved, if thou experience great devotion and sweetness: for it is not in such things as these that a true lover of virtue is known, nor doth the progress and perfection of a man consist in these things.

[*Disciple.*] IV. In what then, O Lord?

[*Christ.*] V. In offering thyself with thy whole heart to the will of God; not seeking the things that are thine, either in little or great, either in time, or in eternity.

So that with the same equal countenance thou continue giving thanks, both in prosperity and adversity, weighing all things in an equal balance.

If thou come to be so valiant and long-suf-

fering in hope, that when interior comfort is withdrawn, thou canst prepare thy heart to suffer still more, and dost not justify thyself, as if thou oughtest not to suffer such great things, but acknowledgest my justice in all my appointments, and praisest my holy name. Then it is that thou walkest in the true and right way of peace, and mayest hope without any doubt to see my face again with great joy.

And if thou arrive to an entire contempt of thyself, know that then thou shalt enjoy an abundance of peace, as much as it is possible in this state of banishment.

Practical Reflections.

WE should sacrifice ourselves entirely to the will of God, and meet with equanimity whatever he decrees for us; that is, we should 1st, desire nothing which is not the will of God; 2ndly, we should not refuse any of the adversities he sends us; 3rdly, we should bring ourselves to a state of perfect self-contempt, so as to receive humiliations and contradictions as our due; 4thly, we should remain firm, constant, and faithful to what God desires of us, although we experience neither consolation nor no delight, nor security; 5thly, we should, in a word, make our delight the delight of God's own heart, that is, we should accomplish his holy will.

Prayer.

YES, O Jesus, in all things I resign myself entirely to thy dominion, I will confide in thee, and abandon myself wholly to thee, persuaded that my salvation can never be more secure than when intrusted to thee my Saviour.

Grant therefore, that I may live under thine eyes, and in thy hands, in a reverential and continual remembrance of thy presence, and an exact dependance upon thy holy will, being assured that my salvation will be the more advanced in proportion as I endeavour to please and love thee, and to mortify and hate myself. Amen.

**Chapter Thirty-sixth.**

Of the eminence of a free mind, which humble prayer better produces than reading.

[*Disciple.*] I. LORD, this is the work of a perfect man, never to let one's mind slacken from attending to heavenly things, and to pass through many cares, as it were without care: not after the manner of an indolent person, but by a certain prerogative of a free mind, which doth not cleave by an inordinate affection to any thing created.

II. Preserve me, I beseech thee, O my most merciful God, from the cares of this life, that I be not too much entangled by them; from the many necessities of the body, that I may not be ensnared by pleasure; and from all hinderances of the soul, lest being overcome by troubles I be cast down.

I do not say from those things which worldly vanity covets with so much eagerness; but from those miseries, which, by the general curse of our mortality as punishments, weigh down and keep back the soul of thy servant from being able, when it will, to enter into liberty of spirit.

III. O my God, who art unspeakable sweetness, make me look upon as bitter, all carnal comfort which withdraws me from the love of things eternal, and wickedly allures me to itself, by setting before me a certain present delightful good.

O my God, let not flesh and blood prevail over me, let it not overcome me: let not the world and its transitory glory deceive me: let not the devil supplant me by his craft.

Give me fortitude, that I may stand my ground; patience, that I may endure; and constancy, that I may persevere.

Give me, in lieu of all the comforts of this world, the most delightful unction of thy spirit; and instead of carnal love, infuse into me the love of thy name.

IV. Behold! eating, drinking, clothing,

and other necessaries, appertaining to the support of the body, are burthensome to a fervent spirit.

Grant that I may use such things with moderation, and not be entangled with an inordinate affection to them.

It is not lawful to cast them all away, for nature must be supported; but to require superfluities, and such things as are most delightful, thy holy law forbids: for otherwise the flesh would grow insolent against the spirit.

In all this I beseech thee let thy hand govern and direct me, that I may no way exceed.

Practical Reflections.

THE mortification of the senses, and the victory over our own humours are so essential for salvation, that, in truth, the soul which gives itself to exterior objects, and is often more engaged upon itself than upon God, is totally unworthy of him; because when it gives itself to its passions, it can have no desire to please God. Ah! how will it change its ideas and sentiments at the hour of death! when alone with God it shall hear from him this reproach: I have not been thine in time, I will not be thine for eternity! Thou hast preferred the pleasures of sense to the happiness of pleasing me; it is just thou

shouldst now be consigned to all the horrors of a miserable eternity! *Thou didst receive good things in thy life-time*: was it said to the rich man, when he complained in hell of the rigour of his torments; and so will it one day be said to those sensual souls who will not now restrain nor mortify themselves in any thing, unless they endeavour to prefer the happiness of eternity, to the pleasures of time, and to merit heaven by self-control.

Prayer.

GRANT me, O God, strength and courage to restrain the desires of my heart, that I may be free to possess thee; grant that renouncing all sensual gratifications, I may become pleasing and acceptable to thee: happy in sacrificing all that can give me pleasure for the sake of pleasing thee, and in spending my life in repairing thy past displeasure, by penance, and in preventing it for the future by fidelity. O penance, what charms hast thou for a soul that is penetrated with the love of God, and is resolved to avenge him, and to punish itself. Amen.

Chapter Twenty-seventh.

That self-love chiefly keeps a person back from the
Sovereign Good.

[*Christ.*] I. MY SON, thou must give all for all, and be nothing of thy own.

Know that the love of thyself is more hurtful to thee, than any thing in the world.

Every thing according to the love and inclination which thou hast to it, cleaveth to thee more or less.

If thy love be pure, simple, and well ordered, thou shalt not be a captive to any thing.

Covet not that which thou mayest not have.

Seek not to have that which may curb or rob thee of thy inward liberty.

It is wonderful that thou wilt not, from the very bottom of thy heart, commit thyself wholly to me, with all things that thou canst desire or have.

II. Why dost thou pine away with vain grief? Why dost thou suffer thyself to be overwhelmed with useless cares?

Be resigned to my good pleasure, and thou shalt suffer no loss.

If thou seekest this, or that, or wouldst be here or there, for the sake of thy own inter-

est, or the pleasing thy own will, thou shalt never be at rest, nor free from solicitude: for in every thing thou wilt find some defect: and in every place there will be some one that will cross thee.

III. It is not therefore the obtaining or multiplying things exteriorly that avails thee, but rather the despising of them, and cutting them up by the root out of thy heart: which I would not have thee to understand only with regard to money and riches, but also with regard to the ambition of honour, and the desire of empty praise, all which things pass away with the world.

The place avails little, if the spirit of fervour be wanting; neither shall that peace stand long which is sought from abroad, if the state of thy heart wants the true foundation; that is, if thou stand not in me. Thou mayest change, but not better thyself.

For when occasion happens, thou shalt find that which thou didst fly from, and even more.

A PRAYER

For cleansing the heart and obtaining heavenly wisdom.

Disciple.] IV. Confirm me, O God, by the grace of thy Holy Spirit. Give me power to be strengthened in the inward man, and to cast out of my heart all unprofitable care and trouble. Let me not be drawn

away with various desires of any thing whatsoever, whether it be of little or great value; but teach me to look upon all things as passing away, and myself as passing along with them.

For nothing is lasting under the sun, where all is vanity and affliction of spirit. O how wise is he who considers things in this manner!

V. Give me, O Lord, heavenly wisdom, that I may learn above all things to seek thee, and to find thee: above all things to relish thee and to love thee; and to understand all other things as they are, according to the order of thy wisdom.

Grant that I may prudently decline him that flatters me; and patiently bear with him that contradicts me.

For it is great wisdom not to be moved with every kind of words, nor to give ear to the wicked flattering syren: for thus shall we go on securely in the way we have begun.

Practical Reflections.

If we would give ourselves unreservedly to God, we must 1st, seek ourselves in nothing we present to him; 2ndly, we must yield ourselves to him on all occasions, and prefer his will to the suggestions of self-love; 3rdly, we must not allow nor forgive ourselves anything we know to be displeasing to him;

4thly, we must make him the absolute master and proprietor of our whole hearts, so that he may dispose of all that we have and are according to his holy will; 5thly, we must live in a state of dependance and constant docility to the motions of his grace.

To belong thus to God without reserve, is the true means of possessing and living in peace. But, alas, how few belong thus to him! and how many are his only by halves, divide their hearts between him and creatures, and love themselves while they pretend to love him, although they are well aware that all division is injurious to him, and hinders him from reigning absolutely in their hearts, of which he cannot be the master if he be not the sole possessor; nor reign as God within them, if he reign not alone and be preferred before all things else.

Prayer.

SUFFER not my heart, O Lord, which was made only for thee which is entirely the work of thy hands, and the price of thy blood, to belong to any other but thee, or to love anything equally or in preference to thee. Thy delight is to be with the children of men, and why is not thy presence my felicity? Why art thou not more to me than all things else, thou who art mine only and sovereign good? I am resolved hence-

forth absolutely to love thee alone. I will be all thine, seek to please thee in all things, and breathe only thy love. Amen.

Chapter Twenty-eighth.

Against the tongues of detractors.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, take it not to heart if some people think ill of thee, and say of thee what thou art not willing to hear.

Thou oughtest to think worse of thyself, and to believe that no one is weaker than thyself.

If thou walkest *interiorly*, thou wilt make small account of flying words.

It is no small prudence to be silent in the evil time, and to turn within to me, and not to be disturbed with the judgment of men.

II. Let not thy peace be in the tongues of men: for whether they put a good or bad construction on what thou dost, thou art still what thou art.

Where is true peace and true glory? Is it not in me?

And he who covets not to please men, nor fears their displeasure, shall enjoy much peace.

All disquiet of heart, and distractions of the senses, arises from inordinate love and vain fear.

Practical Reflections.

NOTHING is so apt to give us uneasiness and trouble, as the judgments and discourses of others concerning us. We consider it a happiness to please men, and a misfortune to meet with their contempt? and yet, what is the esteem or the frown of the world, but a shadow, a smoke, a vapour which passes away, and adds nothing to what we really are or ought to be? Whatever we are in the eyes of God, so much are we and no more, and therefore we should make no account of the favourable or mean opinions of others.

O human respect! when wilt thou give place to the reverence which we owe to God? Alas! how do human considerations destroy in us all that is pleasing to him. Instead of inquiring what will be most pleasing to Jesus Christ, we think only of what others will say of us. But is it not better to obey God rather than men, to please him rather than to please the world? Why then do we not endeavour to do so?

Prayer.

SUFFER not, O Lord, human respect ever to take place of the reverence which I owe to thee; but grant that a respectful and predominant sense of thy presence and of thy

will, may induce me to perform all my actions, to quit and to suffer all things, for thy love. O my Saviour and my judge, unite my heart to thyself by a dread of displeasing thee, and a desire of being always agreeable in thy sight. Grant, that dying incessantly to myself, I may live only to thee, and by often renewing my intention of pleasing thee, succeed in gaining thy love. Grant that I may so accustom myself to love thee during life, that my last breath may be a fervent act of thy love. Amen.



Chapter Twenty-ninth.

How in the time of tribulation, God is to be invoked and blessed.

[*Disciple.*] I. BLESSED, O Lord, be thy name for ever, who hast been pleased that this trial and tribulation should come upon me.

I cannot fly from it, but must of necessity fly to thee; that thou mayest help me, and turn it to my good.

Lord, I am now in tribulation, and my heart is not at ease: but I am much afflicted with my present suffering.

And now, dear Father, what shall I say?

I am taken, Lord, in these straits: O save me from this hour!

But for this reason I came into this hour, that thou mightest be glorified, when I shall be exceedingly humbled and delivered by thee.

May it please thee, O Lord, to deliver me: for, poor wretch that I am, what can I do, and whither shall I go without thee?

Give me patience, O Lord, at this time also.

Help me, O my God, and I will not fear, how much soever I may be oppressed.

II. And now in the midst of these things, what shall I say? Lord, thy will be done: I have well deserved to be afflicted and troubled.

I must needs bear it, and would to God it may be with patience, till the storm pass over, and it be better.

But thy Almighty hand is able to take away from me this temptation also, and to moderate its violence, as thou hast often done heretofore for me, lest I quite sink under it, *O my God, my mercy!*

And how much the more difficult this is to me, so much the easier to thee is *this change of the right-hand of the Most High*. Ps. lxxvi.

Practical Reflections.

TEMPTATIONS must ever be resisted with firmness and constancy: and that we may

be able to overcome them, we must go with confidence to the throne of God. He often permits us to be so hard pressed, and so weighed down by the load of our miseries, as to leave us no other means of making resistance and maintaining our ground, but that of keeping ourselves closely united to him, and relying upon him for the assistance of his grace. The fewer resources we find within ourselves, the more should we be induced to seek for them in God, and when temptation has nearly overcome us, and we are in danger of yielding, cry out with the Apostles, *Lord save us, or we perish*; our eyes are raised up to thee, who art our Father and our God, able and willing to assist us, our Saviour and Redeemer, engaged to rescue and to save us. The more I experience my own weakness and inability, the more do I hope for strength from thee. It is thy glory and thy delight to defend me, for my soul is the work of thy hands, and the price of thy precious blood.

Prayer.

WE are sensible, O Lord, that without thee, of ourselves, in the time of temptation, we should lose courage, yield to sin, and be vanquished; but we know also, that thou canst do all things, and art willing to assist and to save us. Penetrated with a sense of

our own miseries, yet full of confidence in thy mercy, we place ourselves in thy hands, repose all our hopes in thee, trust in thy bounty, renounce whatever is displeasing to thee, and desire only the accomplishment of thy will. Grant us the grace of living and dying in these holy dispositions; and may they ever induce thee to shew us thy mercy. Amen.



Chapter Thirtieth.

Of asking the divine assistance, and of confidence of recovering grace.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, I am the Lord, who gives strength in the day of tribulation.

Come to me, when it is not well with thee.

This is that which most of all hinders heavenly comfort, that thou art slow in turning thyself to prayer.

For before thou earnestly prayest to me, thou seekest in the mean time many comforts, and delightest thyself in outward things.

And hence it comes to pass, that all things avail thee little, till thou take notice that I am he who delivers those that trust in me. Nor is there out of me any powerful help, nor profitable counsel, nor lasting remedy.

But now having recovered spirit after the

storm, grow thou strong again in the light of my tender mercies: for I am at hand, to repair all, not only to the full, but even with abundance and above measure.

II. Is anything difficult to me? or shall I be like one that promises and does not perform?

Where is thy faith? Stand firmly, and with perseverance.

Have patience, and be of good courage; comfort will come to thee in its proper season.

Wait for me, wait, I will come and cure thee.

It is a temptation that troubles thee, and a vain fear that frights thee.

What does that solicitude about future accidents bring thee, but only sorrow upon sorrow? *Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.* Matt. vi.

It is a vain and unprofitable thing, to conceive either grief or joy for future things, which perhaps will never happen.

III. But it is incident to man to be deluded with such imaginations; and a sign of soul that is as yet weak, to be so easily drawn away by the suggestions of the enemy.

For he cares not whether it be with things true or false that he abuses and deceives thee: whether he overthrow thee with the love of things present, or the fear of things to come.

Let not therefore thy heart be troubled, and let it not fear.

Believe in me, and trust in my mercy.

When thou thinkest I am far from thee, I am often nearest to thee.

When thou judgest that almost all is lost, then oftentimes it is that thou art in the way of the greatest gain of merit.

All is not lost when anything falls out otherwise than thou wouldst have it.

Thou must not judge according to thy present feeling; nor give thyself up in such manner to any trouble, from whence soever it comes; nor take it so, as if all hope were gone of being delivered out of it.

IV. Think not thyself wholly forsaken, although for a time I have sent thee some tribulation, or withdrawn from thee the comfort which thou desirest: for this is the way to the kingdom of heaven.

And without doubt it is more expedient for thee, and for the rest of my servants, that thou be exercised by adversities, than that thou shouldst have all things according to thy inclination.

I know thy secret thoughts, I know that it is very expedient for thy soul that thou shouldst sometimes be left without consolation, lest thou shouldst be puffed up with good success, and shouldst take a complaisance in thyself, imagining thyself to be what thou art not.

What I have given, I can justly take away, and restore it again when I please.

V. When I give it, it is still mine ; when I take it away again, I take not anything that is thine ; for *every good gift, and every perfect gift is mine.* James i.

If I send thee affliction, or any adversity, repine not, neither let thy heart be cast down.

I can quickly raise thee up again, and turn all thy burden into joy.

Nevertheless, I am just, and greatly to be praised, when I deal thus with thee.

VI. If thou thinkest rightly, and considerest things in truth, thou oughtest never to be so much dejected and troubled for any adversity :

But rather to rejoice and give thanks : yea, to account this as a special subject of joy, that afflicting thee with sorrows I do not spare thee.

As my Father hath loved me, I also have loved you, John xv. said I to my beloved disciples, whom certainly I did not send to temporal joys, but to great conflicts ; not to honours, but to contempt ; not to idleness, but to labours ; not to rest, but to bring forth much fruit in patience. Remember these words, O my son.

Practical Reflections.

I AM the Lord, saith the Almighty, by the mouth of one of his prophets, who give strength to souls in the day of trouble ; and

deliver those from danger who put their trust in me. How consoling, how encouraging and supporting are these words to a soul that in the time of temptation and adversity, is faithful and constant to what God requires of it! This is what the scripture calls, to wait for and to support the Lord.

Believe in me, says our blessed Saviour, and thy heart shall not be troubled nor fear. Wherefore, upon occasion of interior or exterior affliction, we should, in the first place, have recourse to God with confidence; 2ndly, we should resign ourselves to his blessed will; 3rdly, we should not neglect any of our spiritual exercises; 4thly, we should subdue ourselves, restrain and renounce ourselves in all things, that we may act in concert with God; 5thly, we should consider it our welfare and our merit to be afflicted, tormented, and as it were annihilated for the honour of God's majesty; 6thly, we should be content to carry a crucified heart, a heart suffering and penetrated with bitterness and sorrow, in imitation of our crucified Jesus.

Prayer.

No, Lord, I will not give up all as lost, when thou seemest to withdraw thyself from me; but on the contrary, I will believe all gained, when my soul, though sinking under fatigue, and withered with bitterness,

shall resign itself to thy holy will, and live only in thee, saying with the prophet : I commit to thee all my strength, for my soul is in thy hands, and thy mercy supports and encourages my heart to profit by the sense of my miseries. Abandon me not, O God ! to the disorder of my passions, but be thou their master by thy grace, and keep me always in the possession of thy love. Amen.

Chapter Thirty-first.

Of disregarding all things created, that so we may find the Creator.

I. LORD, I stand much in need of a grace yet greater, if I must arrive so far, that it may not be in the power of any man, nor any thing created, to hinder me.

For as long as any thing holds me, I cannot freely fly to thee.

He was desirous to fly freely to thee, who said, *Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest.* Ps. liv.

What can be more at rest than a simple eye that aims at nothing but God ?

And what can be more free, than he who desires nothing upon earth ?

A man ought therefore to pass and ascend above every thing created, and perfectly to

forsake himself, and in ecstasy of mind to stand and see that no creatures can be compared with thee; because thou infinitely transcendest them all.

And unless a man be at liberty from all things created, he cannot freely attend to things divine.

And this is the reason why there are found so few contemplative persons; because there are few that wholly sequester themselves from transitory and created things.

II. For this, a great grace is required, which may elevate the soul, and carry her up above herself.

And unless a man be elevated in spirit, and set at liberty from all creatures, and wholly united to God; whatever he knows, and whatever he has, is of no great weight.

Long shall he be little, and lie grovelling beneath, who esteems any thing great, but only the *one, immense, eternal Good*.

And whatsoever is not God is *nothing*, and ought to be accounted as *nothing*.

There is a great difference between the wisdom of an illuminated devout man, and the knowledge of a scholar.

Far more noble is that learning which flows from above, from the divine influence, than that which with labour is acquired by the industry of man.

III. Many are found to desire contemplation; but they care not to practise those things which are required thereunto.

It is a great impediment that we so much regard signs and sensible things, and have but little of perfect mortification.

I know not what it is, by what spirit we are led, or what we pretend to, who seem to be called *spiritual* persons; that we take so much pains, and have a great solicitude for transitory and mean things, and scarce ever have our senses fully recollected to think of our own interior.

IV. Alas! after a slight recollection, we presently wander out of ourselves again, neither do we weigh well our works by a strict examination.

We take no notice where our affections lie: nor do we lament the great want of purity in all we do.

For all flesh had corrupted its way, and therefore the great flood ensued. Gen. v. & vii.

As therefore our interior affection is much corrupted, it must needs be that the action which follows should also be corrupted, which is a testimony of the want of inward vigour.

From a pure heart proceeds the fruit of a good life.

V. We are apt to inquire how much a man has done; but with how much virtue he has done it, is not so diligently considered.

We ask whether he be strong, rich, beautiful, ingenious, a good writer, a good singer, or a good workman; but how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and internal, is what few speak of.

Nature looks upon the outward things of a man, but grace turns herself to the interior.

Nature is often deceived, but grace hath her trust in God, that she may not be deceived.

Practical Reflections.

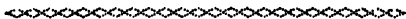
NOTHING is worthy of a christian's affections, but what is eternal: he should never love anything but what he may love for ever. Wherefore let us endeavour in the 1st place, to prefer the will of God to all other satisfactions; 2ndly, to seek in all things to please him; 3rdly, to receive as coming from his hands, with humble submission, whatever he is pleased to send us; 4thly, to recollect ourselves frequently in his presence and depend upon him in all things.

Why should we be busied about trifles, with vain reflections upon ourselves, and disquieted about others, while God is residing within us, and expecting from us the homage of our hearts, and the dedication of our whole selves to him? We know how dangerous it is to neglect the grace of God, and yet we make small account of the losses we sustain by yielding to a spirit of dissipation, paying but little attention to what God requires of us.

Prayer.

O MY God and my all! O amiable and most loving God! O God love! how little attention do I pay to thy presence, how unfaithful am I to thy grace, and how little courage do I evince for the sacrifice of all satisfaction to thee! And yet thou art the God of my heart, and as I hope, my portion for ever. To become worthy of this happiness I desire to keep my mind constantly fixed on thee, to sacrifice every thing to thy love which may divert me from thee, and neither to say nor to do anything but in order to gain heaven.

Grant, O Lord, that I may avoid whatever is offensive to thee, and love and practise that only which is well pleasing in thy sight; and that frequently recollecting myself in thee, I may apply my whole self to thy presence, and do thy holy will in all things. Amen.

**Chapter Thirty-second.**

Of denying ourselves and renouncing cupidity.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, thou canst not possess perfect liberty, unless thou wholly deny thyself.

All self-seekers and self-lovers are bound in fetters, full of desires, full of cares, unsettled, and seeking always their own ease, and not the things of Jesus Christ; but oftentimes devising and framing that which shall not stand.

For all shall come to nothing that proceeds not from God.

Take this short and perfect word: *Forsake all, and thou shalt find all; leave thy desires, and thou shalt find rest.*

Consider this well, and when thou shalt put it in practice, thou shalt understand all things.

[*Disciple.*] II. Lord, this is not the work of one day, nor children's sport; yea, in this short sentence is included the whole perfection of a religious man.

[*Christ.*] III. Son, thou must not be turned back, nor presently cast down, when thou hearest what the way of the perfect is, but rather be incited thereby to undertake great things, or at least to sigh after them with an earnest desire.

I would it were so with thee, and that thou wert come so far that thou wert no longer a lover of thyself, but didst stand wholly at my beck, and at his whom I have appointed Father over thee; then wouldst thou exceedingly please me, and all thy life would pass in joy and peace.

Thou hast yet many things to forsake,

which unless thou give up to me without reserve, thou shalt not attain to that which thou demandest.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest become rich. Apoc. iii.

That is heavenly wisdom, which treads under foot all things below.

Set aside the wisdom of the earth, that is, all seeking to please the world and thyself.

IV. I have said that thou shouldst give the things that are high and of great esteem with men, to purchase those which are esteemed contemptible.

For true heavenly wisdom seems very mean and contemptible, and is scarce thought of by men; that wisdom, which teaches to think meanly of one's self, and not to seek to become great upon earth: which many praise in words, but in their life they are far from it; yet this same is that *precious pearl*, which is hidden from many. Matt. xiii.

Practical Reflections.

WHAT is it to quit all things? It is, 1st, to renounce and to die to ourselves; 2ndly, to mortify the senses, the mind and the heart; 3rdly, to detach ourselves from everything that affords us pleasure, and to receive with willingness and submission whatever gives us pain; 4thly to love our friends in God, our enemies for God, and to hate only ourselves; 5thly, to attach ourselves only to God,

to our duties and to our salvation; 6thly, to direct all the energies of our hearts towards God and against ourselves; 7thly, to desire nothing but to please him, and to fear nothing but to offend him; 8thly, to make it our happiness and our merit to gain the light of his countenance, and to become worthy of his love.

How easy to say, I desire to quit all and to belong entirely to God! but how difficult to perform, unless we withdraw ourselves with fixed determination from everything which does not lead us to him! A small degree of divine love makes this dedication and sacrifice of ourselves to God, possible and easy. We should constantly desire it, ask for it and practise it.

Prayer.

SUFFER not my heart, O Lord, which was created to love and to possess thee, to be attached to creatures or to itself preferably to thee. Thou alone canst satisfy it, and make it happy; to thee therefore should it solely and constantly adhere. O my God! well may I sin without thee; but I cannot rise again without thee, nor withdraw myself from anything that would seduce my mind, and corrupt my unsteady heart. Succour, support, and strengthen me in the combats which I am obliged to sustain with myself, in my endeavours to renounce all, that in all I may

veek and find thee. How it distresses me
 to behold myself the slave of my passions,
 and the victim of my wayward humours!
 Break asunder my chains, O Lord! and grant
 that detaching myself from all things else,
 I may adhere only to thee. Amen.



Chapter Thirty-third.

Of the inconstancy of our heart, and of directing our
 final intention to God.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, trust not to thy present affection; it will quickly be changed into another.

As long as thou livest thou art subject to change, even against thy will; so as to be sometimes joyful, at other times sad; now easy, now troubled; at one time devout, at another dry; sometimes fervent, at other times sluggish; one day heavy, another lighter.

But he that is wise, and well instructed in *spirit*, stands above all these changes: not minding what he feels in himself, nor on what side the wind of mutability blows; but that the whole bent of his soul may advance towards its due and wished for end.

For so he may continue one and the self-same without being shaken, by directing with-

out ceasing, through all this variety of events, the single eye of his attention towards me.

II. And by how much more pure the eye of the intention is, with so much greater constancy mayest thou pass through these diverse storms.

But in many the eye of *pure intention* is dark: for men quickly look towards something delightful which comes in their way.

And it is rare to find one wholly free from all blemish of self-seeking.

So the Jews heretofore came into Bethania to Martha and Mary, not for Jesus only, but that they might see Lazarus also. John xi.

The eye of the intention therefore must be purified, that it may be single and right; and must be directed unto me, beyond all the various objects that interpose themselves.

Practical Reflections.

IN order to fix the instability of our hearts in what regards the service of God, and the care of our salvation, we should 1st, mistrust ourselves and confide in God; 2ndly, we should have recourse to him and implore his assistance on all occasions; 3rdly, we should often renew our intention of pleasing him, without wishing to please ourselves; 4thly, we should fight without ceasing, against our natural repugnances; 5thly, we should desire only what God wills, and endeavour to

execute it; 6thly, we should accustom our hearts to love God, and as it were, contract those holy bonds by which he desires to be united with us for ever; and 7thly, we should punctually attend to the inspirations and motions of his grace.

Prayer.

WHEN shall thy grace, O God! inspire me with some degree of that firmness and faithful adherence to thee, which thy glory imparts to the blessed? Suffer not my heart to be subject to that inconstancy, which is so natural to it, nor my life to be a perpetual succession of good desires and evil practices, of promises and infidelities. To love thee not at all times, is not to love thee as God: thy reign over our hearts, to be worthy of thee, should be constant and invariable.

Grant, then, O God, that my soul may be all thine at all times, and for ever; and that by my perpetual fidelity, I may merit eternal happiness. Amen.



Chapter Thirty-fourth.

That he that loves God, relishes him above all things,
and in all things.

[*Disciple.*] I. BEHOLD, *my God, and my All!* What would I have more, and what can I desire more happy?

O savoury and sweet Word! but to him that loves the *Word*, not the world, nor the things that are in the world.

My God, and my All! Enough is said to him that understands; and it is delightful to him that loves to repeat it often.

For when thou art present, all things yield delight: but when thou art absent, all things are loathsome.

Thou givest tranquillity to the heart, and great peace, and pleasant joy.

Thou makest us to think well of all, and praise thee in all things; nor can any thing without thee afford any lasting pleasure; but to make it agreeable and relishing, thy grace must be present: and it must be seasoned with the seasoning of thy wisdom.

II. He that has a relish of thee will find all things savoury.

And to him that relishes thee not, what can ever yield any true delight?

But the wise of this world, and the admirers of the flesh, are far from the relish of thy wisdom: because in the world is much vanity, and following the flesh leads to death.

But they that follow thee, by despising the things of this world, and mortifying the flesh, are found to be wise indeed: for they are translated from vanity to truth, from the flesh to the spirit.

Such as these have a relish for God; and what good soever is found in creatures, they refer it all to the praise of their Maker.

But great, yea very great, is the difference between the relish of the Creator and the creature; of eternity and of time; of light uncreated, and of light enlightened.

III. O Light eternal, transcending all created lights, dart forth thy light from above, which may penetrate the most inward parts of my heart.

Cleanse, cherish, enlighten, and enliven my spirit with its powers, that it may be absorbed in thee with ecstasies of joy.

O! when will this blessed and desirable hour come, when thou shalt fill me with thy presence, and become to me, *All in All?*

As long as this is not granted me, my joy will not be full.

Alas! the old man is still living in me; he is not wholly crucified, he is not perfectly dead.

He still lusts strongly against the spirit;

he wages war within me, and suffers not the kingdom of my soul to be quiet.

IV. But, O Lord, who *rulest over the power of the sea, and assuagest the motion of its waves*, Ps. lxxxviii. arise and help me.

Scatter thou the nations that delight in wars. Ps. lxxvii. Crush them by thy power.

Shew forth, I beseech thee, thy wonderful works: and let thy right hand be glorified; for there is no other hope nor refuge for me, but in thee, O Lord, my God.

Practical Reflections.

To love God alone, to love him above all things, is to delight only in him, to seek only him, and to renounce everything which by nature is pleasing to us, according to that of the royal prophet: *My soul refused to be comforted: I remembered God, and was delighted, and was exercised, and my spirit swooned away*. Ps. lxxvii.

Wherefore, if we would love only God, let us mortify the senses, captivate the mind, restrain the heart, subdue the flesh, and refuse ourselves numberless gratifications, in order to please God. Happy the soul that is willing to live a crucified life with Jesus upon the cross, that so it may be able to say with the apostle: Jesus Christ is my life, and it is my gain to die to all that I may live for him alone.

Prayer.

How sweet, O Lord, to breathe only thy love, and to say, to thee with my whole heart, "My God and my all! my Lord and my God!" Grant that these words may enter into my soul; do thou impress them upon my mind, and in my heart; grant me to understand and to practise them. O great God, *thou* art, and this doth satisfy me, because I love thee more for thyself than for my own sake. But, O God! thou art my Saviour: all that thou art in this respect, thou art for me, and this redoubles my confidence and love for thee. O my God! how can I live without thee? How can I not live for thee? O my Lord! reign absolutely over me. O my God! may my whole self be thine, and may I live only for thee! My Lord and my God! mayest thou be mine in time, that thou mayest be my portion for all eternity. Amen.

Chapter Thirty-fifth.

That there is no being secure from temptation in this life.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, thou art never secure in this life; but as long as thou livest thou hast always need of spiritual arms.

Thou art in the midst of enemies, and art assaulted on all sides.

If then thou dost not now make use of the buckler of patience, thou wilt not be long without a wound.

Moreover, if thou dost not fix thy heart on me, with a sincere will of suffering all things for my sake thou canst not support the heat of this warfare, nor attain to the victory of the saints: it behoveth thee therefore to go through all manfully, and to use a strong hand against all things that oppose thee.

For *to him that overcomes is given manna*, Apoc. ii. and to the sluggard is left much misery.

II. If thou seekest rest in this life, how then wilt thou come to rest everlasting?

Set not thyself to seek for much rest, but for much patience.

Seek true peace, not upon earth, but in heaven: not in men, nor in other things created, but in God alone.

Thou must be willing, for the love of God, to suffer all things, *viz.* labours and sorrows, temptations and vexations, anxieties, necessities, sicknesses, injuries, detractions, reprehensions, humiliations, confusions, corrections, and contempts.

These things help to obtain virtue: these try a novice of Christ: these procure a heavenly crown.

I will give an everlasting reward for this

short labour, and glory without end for transitory confusion.

III. Dost thou think to have always spiritual consolations when thou pleasest?

My saints had not so; but met with many troubles, and various temptations, and great desolations.

But they bore all with patience, and confided more in God than in themselves; knowing that the sufferings of this life bear no proportion to the greatness of the glory to come.

Wouldest thou have that immediately, which others, after many tears and great labours, have hardly obtained?

Expect the Lord, do manfully, and be of good heart: do not despond, do not fall off, but constantly offer both soul and body for the glory of God.

I will reward thee most abundantly, and will be with thee in all thy tribulations.

Practical Reflections.

PREPARE thy soul for temptation, says the wise man; that is, 1st, let not thy happiness consist in being free from sufferings, but in bearing them patiently; 2ndly, expose not thyself voluntarily to temptation, nor to the occasions of sin; but if thou shouldst be attacked by the one or engaged in the other, resist, fight, fly, and have recourse to God

with all confidence; 3rdly, watch, pray, humble thyself before God, and be penetrated with a reverential fear in his presence, a holy diffidence in thyself, and a firm confidence in him, who will support thee against all the attacks of thy spiritual enemies.

A truly christian soul should dwell upon Calvary, in the wounds of Jesus, and there suffer with patience, fortitude, and fidelity, whatever he is pleased to appoint. For to be true Christians, and to fulfil the duties of our state, we must be ever resolved to suffer and to die for God; since (as St. Cyprian remarks) christians are the heirs of a crucified Jesus.

Prayer.

THOU knowest, O God, that nothing is so contrary to our natural inclinations as to suffer and to die? but to accomplish this, thou canst and wilt assist us. Give us therefore, courage to conquer our unwillingness to suffer contradictions, and our repugnance to the discharge of our duties; and grant that neither the delight of pleasure nor the fear of pain may ever induce us to become wanting in fidelity or submission to thee. Amen.



Chapter Thirty-sixth.

Against the vain judgments of men.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, cast thy heart firmly on the Lord, and fear not the judgment of man, when thy conscience gives testimony of thy piety and innocence.

It is good and happy to suffer in this manner, neither will this be grievous to an humble heart, nor to him that trusts in God more than in himself.

Many say many things, and therefore little credit is to be given to them.

Neither is it possible to satisfy all.

Though Paul endeavoured to please all in the Lord, and made himself all unto all; yet he made little account of his being judged by the judgment of men. 1 Cor. iv. and ix.

II. He laboured for the edification and salvation of others, as much as he could, and as lay in him; but he could not prevent his being sometimes judged or despised by others.

Therefore he committed all to God, who knows all, and defended himself by patience and humility against the tongues of those that spoke evil, or that thought and gave out at pleasure vain and faulty things of him.

However, he answered them sometimes, lest his silence might give occasion of scandal to the weak.

III. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a mortal man? To-day he is, and to-morrow he appears no more.

Fear God, and thou shalt have no need of being afraid of man.

What can any one do against thee, by his words or injuries? He rather hurts himself than thee; nor can he escape the judgment of God, whoever he be.

See thou have God before thine eyes, and do not contend with complaining words.

And if at present thou seem to be overcome, and to suffer a confusion which thou hast not deserved, do not repine at this, and do not lessen thy crown by impatience.

Rather look up to me in heaven, who am able to deliver thee from all confusion and wrong, and to repay every one according to his works.

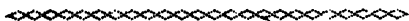
Practical Reflections.

A CHRISTIAN when assailed by the shafts of calumny, should in reality, regard these trials in a favourable point of view, because they subject him to the happy necessity of flying to God, and of appealing to him as the secret witness of his conscience. Although we are fully convinced, that in reality,

the esteem or contempt of men, their good or bad opinion respecting us, can neither make us more happy nor more miserable; yet do we strive to obtain their approbation. Why do we not rather endeavour to establish ourselves in the favour of God, who will decide our eternal doom?

Prayer.

O LORD! who didst sacrifice thy life by a cruel and disgraceful death, and didst give thy heart to perpetual sorrow and bitterness for my sake, can I refuse to sacrifice to thee the sensibilities of my heart, when troubled on account of the remarks and disadvantageous judgments of others, concerning me? Grant, O divine Jesus! that at the sight of the outrages thou didst endure for me, my heart may reproach itself for suffering so little, and that so unwillingly for thee. And, since the wounds which are inflicted upon the reputation of our neighbour fall always, either in this life, or in the next, upon him who does the injury, for thy glory, and not for mine, deliver my enemies from their blindness, forgive their malice, and inflame them with the fire of thy charity. Amen.



Chapter Thirty-seventh.

Of a pure and full resignation of ourselves, for the obtaining freedom of heart.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, leave thyself, and thou shalt find me.

Stand without choice, or any self-seeking, and thou shalt always gain.

For greater grace shall always be added to thee, when thou hast perfectly given up thyself without resuming thyself again.

[*Disciple.*] II. Lord, how often shall I resign myself, and in what things shall I leave myself?

[*Christ.*] III. Always, and at all times; as in little, so also in great: I make no exception, but will have thee to be found in all things divested of thyself.

Otherwise how canst thou be mine, and I thine, unless thou be both within and without freed from all self-will?

The sooner thou effectest this, the better will it be for thee; and the more fully and sincerely thou dost it, the more wilt thou please me, and the more shalt thou gain.

IV. Some there are that resign themselves, but it is with some exception: for they do not trust wholly to God, and therefore are

busy to provide for themselves. Some also at the first offer all; but afterwards being assaulted by temptation, return again to what they left; and therefore they make no progress in virtue.

These shall not attain to the true liberty of a pure heart, nor to the grace of a delightful familiarity with me, unless they first entirely resign themselves up, and offer themselves a daily sacrifice to me: for without this, divine union neither is, nor will be obtained.

V. I have often said to thee, and I repeat it now again: forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy a great inward peace.

Give all, for all; seek nothing, call for nothing back; stand purely, and with a full confidence in me, and thou shalt possess me.

Thou shalt be at liberty within thy own heart, and darkness shall not overwhelm thee.

Aim only at this, pray for this: desire this, that thou mayest be divested of all self-seeking, and thus naked, follow thy naked Jesus; that thou mayest die to thyself, and live eternally to me.

Then all vain imaginations shall vanish, all evil disturbances and superfluous cares.

Then also immoderate fear shall leave thee, and inordinate love shall die.

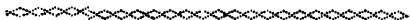
Practical Reflections.

WHAT is it to quit, to renounce, to abandon ourselves entirely to God, without any reserve? It is, 1st, to act only from the influence of his grace, and an actual desire to please him, a desire which should be kept up and oftentimes renewed; 2ndly, it is to yield to him on all occasions, and to prefer his pleasure to our own; 3rdly, it is to renounce our own will in all things, and to follow only the will of God; 4thly, it is to make our pleasure consist in pleasing him, and to have no other interest but his glory; 5thly, to be docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and the impressions of his love. But, alas! who is there that lives after this manner? Who is there that thus renounces himself and abandons himself unreservedly to God? We renounce ourselves on some occasions, and on others we adhere to self-love; we quit ourselves for a time, and then again we seek ourselves. The spirit of the Lord, says the royal prophet, only passes by certain souls, but does not stay; and when he returns, he knoweth his place no more; he finds them given more to themselves than to their God.

Prayer.

How am I wearied, O Lord! with being so much given to myself, and so little devoted

to thee; with seeking myself so often, and thee so seldom, alas! it is because I am vehemently alive to self, and but very little sensible of thee! O my God! substitute thyself in my soul by causing thy love to reign where self-love now predominates. When shall I become free and disengaged from myself, and seek only to love and to please thee? Give me, in this respect what thou commandest, and command what thou pleasest. I desire that from this moment, thou mayest be the God of my heart and my portion for ever. Amen.



Chapter Thirty-eight.

Of the government of ourselves in outward things, and of having recourse to God in dangers.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, thou must diligently make it thy aim, that in every place, and in every action or outward employment, thou be inwardly free, and master of thyself; and that all things be under thee, and not thou under them.

That thou mayest be lord and ruler of thy actions, not a slave or bondsman.

But rather a freeman, and a true Hebrew; transferred to the lot, and to the liberty of the children of God:

K

Who stand above the things present, and contemplate those that are eternal.

Who look upon transitory things with the left eye, and with the right the things of heaven.

Who suffer not themselves to be drawn away by temporal things to cleave to them: but rather draw these things to that end for which they were ordained by God, and appointed by that Sovereign Artist, who has left nothing in all his works but what is regular and orderly.

II. If likewise, in all events, thou rulest not thyself by the outward appearance, nor lookest on the things which thou seest or hearest with a carnal eye, but presently, on every occasion, dost enter like Moses into the Tabernacle to consult the Lord, thou shalt sometimes hear the divine answer, and come out instructed in many things present and to come.

For Moses always had recourse to the Tabernacle, for the deciding all doubts and questions; and fled to the help of prayer, against the dangers and wickedness of men.

So must thou in like manner fly to the closet of thy heart, and there must earnestly implore the divine assistance. For Joshua and the children of Israel, as thou readest, Jos. ix. were therefore deceived by the *Gideonites*; because they did not first consult the Lord, but too easily giving credit to fair words, were deluded with counterfeit piety.

Practical Reflections.

EXTERIOR occupations oftentimes withdraw the soul from within, and hinder it from being recollected, and from keeping itself in the presence of God, particularly when we give ourselves wholly to them, and reserve not for God the freedom of our hearts. But when we only lend ourselves to exterior employments, and give ourselves while performing them, to the accomplishment of the will of God, who requires them of us, then we do not become dissipated, but in the diversity of our employments we do the *one thing*, which is to seek to please God. The desire to please God, should include every other desire, and constitute our peace and happiness. No exterior actions can distract that soul which reduces all to unity, that is, which seeks only to please God and finds its all in him.

Prayer.

I AM well aware, my God, that the peace of the soul in this life is not what it will be in the next; for in eternity we shall enjoy the certainty of pleasing thee, and of possessing thy love; but in time we can be certain of neither. Ah! how hard and painful is this uncertainty, to a soul that loves thee, O

God, and loves but thee alone! If thou wilt not assure me that I love thee, grant at least that I may live as though I were sure I did love thee, that thus thou mayest have all the satisfaction of my love, and I all the merit of it. Amen.



Chapter Thirty-ninth.

That a man must not be over eager in his affairs.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, always commit thy cause to me; I will dispose well of it in due season. Wait for my disposal, and thou shalt find it will be for thy advantage.

[*Disciple.*] II. Lord, I willingly commit all things to thee; for my care can profit little.

I wish I was not too much set upon future events, but offered myself with all readiness to thy divine pleasure.

[*Christ.*] III. My son, oftentimes a man eagerly sets about a thing which he desires; but when he has obtained it, he begins to be of another mind. For men's inclinations are not wont to continue long upon the same thing, but rather pass from one thing to another.

It is therefore a thing not of the least importance, to forsake thyself even in the least things.

IV. A man's true progress consists in denying himself: and the man that has renounced himself, is very much at liberty, and very safe.

But the old enemy, who opposes all that is good, fails not to tempt; but day and night lays his dangerous plots to draw the unwary into his deceitful snares. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* Matt. xxvi.

Practical Reflections.

It is vain to trouble ourselves about the future, and to be discouraged at the sight of our infirmities; all consists in relying entirely upon God; in leaving ourselves in his hands, and in sparing no pains to please him.

It often happens that God wills or permits our anxiety concerning salvation, to bring us into a state bordering on despair, in order to oblige us to place our whole confidence in him. For the less we are supported by creatures, the more we are upheld by God, whose will and pleasure it is to assist us when all others abandon us. Let us therefore endeavour to cast all our care upon Jesus, who will be mindful of us, and let us faithfully correspond with his holy designs.

Prayer.

O MY God! who art able and willing to assist me, what grounds have I not to place my whole confidence in thee, to throw myself into the arms of thy providence, and wait the effects of thy bounty? Thou hast care of all; I will therefore give myself up entirely to thee, live always in thy presence, and ever guide myself by thy fear and love. It is this grace I now ask of thee, the God of my heart and my portion for ever. Grant me to weigh well, and to follow thy admonition: "*be not solicitous; for your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.*" Amen.



Chapter Fortieth.

That man hath no good in himself, and that he cannot glory in any thing.

[Disciple.] I. LORD, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou vouchsafest to visit him? Ps. vi.

What hath man deserved, that thou shouldst give him thy grace?

Lord, what cause have I to complain, if thou forsake me? or what can I justly allege, if thou refuse to grant my petition?

This, indeed, I may truly think and say: *Lord, I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have nothing of myself that is good; but I fail and am defective in all things, and ever tend to nothing.*

And unless I am supported and interiorly instructed by thee, I become quite tepid and dissolute.

II. But thou, O Lord, art always the same, and endurest for ever; always good, just, and holy; doing all things well, justly, and holily: and disposing them in wisdom.

But I, who am more inclined to go back than go forward, continue not always in one state; for seven different seasons are changed over me.

Yet it quickly becomes better when it pleaseth thee, and thou stretchest out thy helping hand; for thou alone, without man's aid, can assist me; and so strengthen me, that my countenance shall be no more changed, but my heart shall be converted, and take its rest in thee alone.

III. Wherefore, if I did but well know how to cast away from me all human comfort, either for the sake of devotion, or through the necessity of seeking thee; because there is no man that can comfort me;

Then might I justly depend on thy grace, and rejoice in the gift of new consolation.

IV. Thanks be to thee, from whom all proceeds, as often as it goes well with me.

But, for my part, I am but mere vanity, and nothing in thy sight; an inconstant weak man.

What have I then to glory in? or why do I desire to be esteemed?

Is it not for nothing? And this is most vain.

Truly, vain-glory is an evil plague, a very great vanity; because it draws us away from true glory, and robs us of heavenly grace.

For whilst a man takes complacency in himself, he displeaseth thee; whilst he seeks after the praises of men, he is deprived of true virtues.

V. But true glory and holy joy is to glory in thee, and not in one's self; to rejoice in thy name, and not to be delighted in one's own virtue, nor in any creature save only for thy sake.

Let thy name be praised, not mine; let thy work be extolled, not mine; let thy holy name be blessed, but to me let nothing be attributed of the praises of men.

Thou art my glory, thou art the joy of my heart.

In thee will I glory, and rejoice all the day: but *for myself I will glory in nothing but in my infirmities.* 2 Cor. xii.

V. Let the Jews seek the glory which one man receives from another; I will seek that which is from God alone.

All human glory, all temporal honour, all

worldly grandeur, compared to thy eternal glory, is but vanity and foolishness.

O my Truth and my Mercy, my God, O blessed Trinity! to thee alone be all praise, honour, power, and glory, for endless ages of ages.

Practical Reflections.

I AM sensible of my natural corruption, which renders me incapable of all supernatural good, and prone to all evil; but I cast myself on the mercies of a God who can bring much out of little, as he produced all things out of nothing; since it is not sufficient for me to know my own nothingness, and that I ought to glory in nothing, save only in my infirmities; I should also (for this is most important) be guided by an humble diffidence in myself, and a firm confidence in God, to whom nothing is impossible. When I find no consolation in man, then it is I feel indeed the happy necessity of having recourse to God, and of depending upon him: happy that, all being wanting to me without thee, O Lord, I should find my all in thee! Well might holy Job thus express himself: *thine eyes are upon me and I shall be no more.* For when I think of thee my God! I feel within me an ardent desire of pleasing thee; and everything disappears from before me when thou dost present thyself to my soul.

Prayer.

I DESIRE O God, that thou shouldst reign absolutely over my soul, and that all it contains should yield and be immolated to thee. Grant, that by corresponding with thy holy grace, I may be enabled to suffer the loss of all human and natural satisfaction, to seek in thee alone my consolation, and to sacrifice my whole self to thee.

O great God! who knowest my condition, who art able and willing to assist me, have compassion on the excess of my miseries! Withdraw me from myself, raise me above all visible things; grant that quitting and renouncing myself, I may desire and seek only thee. Amen.



Chapter Forty-first.

Of the contempt of all glory and honour.

[*Christ.*] I. My son, take it not to heart, if thou seest others honoured and advanced, and thyself despised and debased.

Lift up thy heart to me in heaven, and thou wilt not be concerned at thy being contemned by men upon earth.

[*Disciple.*] II. Lord we are in blindness,

and are quickly seduced by vanity. If I look well unto myself, never was any injury done me by any creature, and therefore I cannot justly complain of thee.

For, because I have often and grievously sinned against thee, all creatures have reason to take up arms against me.

To me therefore confusion and contempt is justly due; but to thee praise, honour, and glory.

And unless I put myself in this disposition, to be willing to be despised and forsaken by all creatures, and to be esteemed nothing at all, I cannot arrive at inward peace and strength, nor be spiritually enlightened, nor fully united to thee.

Practical Reflections.

THE eye of God being always upon us, should impress us with a profound respect for him, and the tendency of our souls towards him, should inspire us with a perfect confidence in him. God beholds me: when I think of this, how can I offend him? I behold God, how then can I be discouraged? God exists; that suffices to console the true christian in all his disappointments; because he loves God more for his infinite perfections, than for the favours he receives from him. But God is my father: what more can I have to allay all my uneasiness? But is it not

sufficient to reflect that he is goodness itself, to induce me to confide with certainty in him, and to feel secure of his care and protection? He knows, conducts, and disposes all for my salvation: and where can I be so secure as under the wings of my beloved Saviour?

Prayer.

IN thy loving embraces, O Jesus, I desire to live; in them I wish to die; into the abyss of thy mercies I cast all my miseries; there to obtain forgiveness for my sins, though enormous, by sincerely renouncing them. Yes, for thy name's sake, O Lord, a name of Saviour and Father, thou wilt pardon me my sins because they are great; and because the more enormous they are, the more wilt thou display the magnitude of thy mercy, in their forgiveness. Be propitious therefore to me a miserable sinner, who desires no longer to remain so; and grant that I may love thee the more as my fears yield to the reflection that though thou hast power to destroy me, thou desirest to save me. Amen.



Chapter Forty-second.

That our peace is not to be placed in men.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, if thou placest thy peace in any person, for the sake of thy contentment in his company, thou shalt be unsettled and entangled.

But if thou hast recourse to the everlasting and subsisting Truth, thou shalt not be grieved when a friend departs or dies.

In *me* the love of thy friend must stand; and for me he is to be loved, whoever he be that appears to thee good, and is very dear to thee in this life.

Without *me* no friendship is of any strength, nor will be durable; nor is that love true and pure of which I am not the Author.

Thou oughtest to be so far mortified to such affections of persons beloved, as to wish as far as appertains to thee, to be without any company of man.

By so much the more does a man draw nigh to God, by how much the farther he withdraws himself from all earthly comfort.

So much the higher also he ascends into God, by how much the lower he descends into himself, and by how much the meaner he esteems himself.

II. But he that attributes any thing of good to himself, stops the grace of God from coming into him; for the grace of the Holy Ghost ever seeks an humble heart.

If thou couldst perfectly annihilate thyself, and cast out from thyself all created love, then would abundance of grace flow into thee.

When thou lookest towards creatures, the sight of the Creator is withdrawn from thee.

Learn, for the Creator's sake, to overcome thyself in all things; and then thou shalt be able to attain to the knowledge of God.

How little soever it be, if a thing be inordinately loved and regarded, it keeps thee back from the sovereign Good, and corrupts the soul.

Practical Reflections.

THE more we descend into the abyss of our own nothingness, the more do we become exalted before God. We should therefore, in the 1st place, be little and humble, dependent upon the Almighty, and abide only in him; 2ndly, the more we experience our own weakness and misery, the more earnestly should we apply to the mercy of God; 3rdly, the less we find of good in ourselves, the more should we debase ourselves before him, hoping all things from his bounty; 4thly, we should never suffer our hearts to become attached to anything but God, our duties and

salvation, and love only that which we shall love for ever, that what we commence in time, we may continue throughout eternity. Every friendship which is not in God and for God, is faulty, because we should love God alone, with our whole heart. The heart must be kept free and disengaged from all things, that it may belong only to him who is the centre of our hearts, and who alone can satisfy our desires.

Prayer.

GRANT, O God, that my heart which was made for thee alone, may be ever wholly thine; that free from all undue affection to creatures, it may refer all to thee, and seek thee alone in all things. Yes, my God, I know with St. Augustin, that thou art the centre of our hearts, because thou art their last end and sovereign good, and that they cannot rest until they rest in thee. Grant me therefore what I now ask, a faithful, sovereign, and constant adherence to thee. Amen.



Chapter Forty-third.

Against vain and worldly learning.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, be not moved with the fine and quaint sayings of men: *For the kingdom of God consists not in talk, but in virtue.*

Attend to my words, which inflame the heart, and enlighten the mind; which excite to compunction, and afford manifold consolations.

Never read any thing that thou mayest appear more learned or more wise.

Study rather to mortify thy vices, for this will avail thee more than the being able to answer many hard questions.

II. When thou shalt have read, and shalt know many things, thou must always return to one beginning.

I am he that teacheth men knowledge, and give a more clear understanding to little ones than can be taught by man.

He to whom I speak will quickly be wise, and will make great progress in spirit.

Woe to them that inquire of men after many curious things, and are little curious of the way to serve me.

The time will come, when Christ, the Master of masters, the Lord of angels, shall ap-

pear to hear the lessons of men; that is, to examine the consciences of every one.

And then he will search Jerusalem with candles, and the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the arguments of tongues shall be silent.

III. I am he that in an instant elevates an humble mind, to comprehend more reasons of the Eternal Truth, than could be acquired by ten years study in the schools.

I teach without noise of words, without confusion of opinions, without ambition of honour, without contention of arguments.

I teach to despise earthly things, to loathe things present, to seek things eternal, to relish things eternal, to fly honours, to endure scandals, to repose all hope in me, to desire nothing out of me, and above all things ardently to love me.

IV. For a certain person, by loving me, entirely learned divine things, and spoke wonders.

He profited more by forsaking all things, than by studying subtleties.

But to some I speak things common, to others things more particular; to some I sweetly appear in signs and figures; to others in great light I reveal mysteries.

The voice of the books is the same, but it teacheth not all men alike; because I within am the Teacher of truth,—the Searcher of the heart,—the Understander of thoughts,—the

Promoter of actions; distributing to every one as I judge fitting.

Practical Reflections.

GOD scarcely communicates himself at all to proud and presumptuous souls, who entertain a vain complacency in themselves; because they rob him of that glory which belongs to himself alone. But to the humble, he communicates his most enlivening and efficacious graces, because they confide not in themselves, but from a sense of their own misery and sinfulness, depend solely upon him who alone can make them worthy of his love.

What will it avail a christian to know the duties of religion, unless he practise them? What will it avail him to dispute upon the efficacy and the operations of grace, if he be not faithful in corresponding with it, and in punctually following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit? *Not every one, says Jesus Christ, that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* We hear this declaration, and why does it not influence our conduct?

Prayer.

COME O! Holy Spirit, enlighten the minds of all with thy sacred light, and inflame their hearts with the fire of thy love. Teach us what we are to believe, and engage us to practise it. For, alas! what will it avail us to know what is required of us, in order to be saved, if we do not endeavour to reduce it to practice?

Suffer not our faith to condemn us at the last day, by bearing witness to what we ought to have done to gain heaven, and to our having neglected to perform it; but grant that both our minds and our hearts by belief and practice may equally conspire to prepare us for eternal bliss. Amen.

**Chapter Forty-fourth.**

Of not drawing to ourselves exterior things.

[Christ.] I. SON, in many things it becometh thee to be ignorant, and to esteem thyself as one dead upon earth, and as one to whom the whole world is crucified.

Many things also must thou pass by with a deaf ear, and think rather of those things that appertain to thy peace.

It is more profitable to turn away thy eyes from such things as displease thee, and to leave to every one his own way of thinking, than to give way to contentious discourses.

If thou standest well with God, and lookest at his judgment, thou wilt more easily bear to see thyself overcome.

[*Disciple.*] II. O Lord, to what are we come? Behold a temporal loss is greatly bewailed: for a small gain men labour and toil; but the loss of the soul is little thought on, and hardly ever returns to mind.

That which is of little or no profit takes up our thoughts: and that which is above all things necessary is negligently passed over; for the whole man sinks down into outward things, and unless he quickly recover himself, he willingly continues immersed in them.

Practical Reflections.

To regard one's self as crucified and dead to the world, is 1st, to entertain no attachment for anything but God, one's duty and salvation; 2ndly, to regard all things as passing away, and to say to one's self, I am here to-day, but shall be gone to-morrow: at the hour of death what will honour, fortune, or pleasures avail me? Only in proportion as I have used them as though I used them not.

Happy the christian who dies thus to the

world in affection, before he quits it in reality, who endeavours meritoriously to die daily to some one of those things which he will be forced to relinquish in death! Thus by dying daily, he will best secure for himself a happy departure hence.

We bewail our temporal losses, we incessantly dwell upon them, we are scarcely to be consoled when they happen to us; but when the soul perishes, its loss is soon forgotten, we soon become insensible to it, though this alone should affect a christian. We cannot suffer the loss of any earthly good without regret, but the loss of thee, my God, we mourn not, though thou alone art our sovereign good.

Prayer.

ENLIGHTEN our minds, we beseech thee, O Lord, and impress our hearts with the greatness of our loss, when we withdraw ourselves from thee. Grant that we may ever prefer thee before all things else, and choose rather to lose all worldly goods than relinquish but for one moment thy grace and love. When, O God, shall I resemble the dead within their graves? (that which, according to St. Paul, is the spirit, the character, and the duty of all true christians.) When shall I think no more of the world, and be content for the world to think no more of me? From

henceforth, O Jesus, I desire to die to all things else, that I may live only to thee for time and eternity. Amen.



Chapter Forty-fifth.

That credit is not to be given to all men; and that men are prone to offend in words.

[Disciple.] I. *GRANT me help, O Lord, in my tribulation, for vain is the aid of man.* Ps. lix.

How often have I not found faith there, where I thought I might depend upon it.

And how often have I found it, where I did not expect it?

Vain therefore is all hope in men; but the safety of the just is in thee, O Lord.

Blessed be thou, O Lord my God, in all things that befall us.

We are weak and unsettled, we are quickly deceived and changed.

II. Who is the man that is able to keep himself so warily, and with so much circumspection in all things, as not to fall sometimes into some deceit or perplexity?

But he that trusts in thee, O Lord, and seeks thee with a simple heart, does not so easily fall:

And if he falls into some tribulation, in

what manner soever he may be entangled therewith, he will quickly be rescued or comforted by thee; for thou wilt not forsake for ever him that trusts in thee.

A trusty friend is rarely to be found, that continues faithful in all the distresses of his friend.

Thou, O Lord, thou alone art most faithful in all things, and besides thee, there is no other such.

III. O how wise was that holy soul that said, *My mind is strongly settled and grounded upon Christ.* St. Agatha.

If it were so with me, the fear of man would not so easily give me trouble, nor flying words move me.

Who can foresee all things, or who is able to provide against all future evils?

If things foreseen do nevertheless often hurt us, how can things unlooked for fail of wounding us grievously.

But why did I not provide better for myself, miserable wretch that I am? Why also have I so easily given credit to others?

But we are men, and but frail men, though by many we are reputed and called angels.

To whom shall I give credit, O Lord? to whom but thee? Thou art the truth, which neither canst deceive, nor be deceived.

And on the other side: *Every man is a liar*, Ps. cix. infirm, unstable, and subject to fail, especially in words: so that we ought

not readily to believe even that which in appearance seems to sound well.

IV. How wisely dost thou forewarn us to take heed of men, (Matt. x. 17. 36.) and that a man's enemies are those of his own household: and that we are not to believe, if any one should say, *Behold here, or Behold there.* Matt. xxiv.

I have been taught to my cost, and I wish it may serve to make me more cautious not to increase my folly.

Be wary, saith one, be wary, keep to thyself what I tell thee. And whilst I hold my peace, and believe the matter to be secret, he himself cannot keep the secret which he desires me to keep, but presently discovers both me and himself, and goes his way.

From such tales and such unwary people defend me, O Lord, that I may not fall into their hands, nor ever commit the like.

Give to my mouth truth and constancy in my words, and remove far from me a crafty tongue.

What I am not willing to suffer, I ought by all means to shun.

V. O how good a thing and how peaceable it is to be silent of others, nor to believe all that is said, nor easily to report what one has heard; to lay one's self open to few: always to seek thee the Beholder of the heart; and not to be carried about with every wind of words; but to wish that all things both

within and without us may go according to the pleasure of thy will!

How secure it is for the keeping of heavenly grace, to fly the sight of men; and not to seek those things that seem to cause admiration abroad; but with all diligence to follow that which brings amendment of life and fervour.

To how many hath it been hurtful to have their virtue known, and over-hastily praised.

How profitable indeed hath grace been kept with silence in this frail life, all which is a state of temptation, and a warfare?

Practical Reflections.

WHAT is it to be "*strongly settled and grounded upon Christ?*" (St. Agatha.) It is 1st, to rely only upon him, and trust but little to the promises of men; 2ndly, it is to prefer his grace and love before the friendship and consideration of all mankind beside; for there is no true good but in being well with God; 3rdly, it is to treat with him with all the earnestness of our souls, confidently to have recourse to him in all our necessities, and to oblige our hearts to love him, that at the moment of death, when we shall appear before him, he may shew himself to us as a father of mercy, and as a Saviour whom we have long known and loved, and not as a strange God, and terribly just

judge, saying to us, you would not endeavour to know me and to love me in time, now will I not know you for eternity, you shall not be mine for ever.

Prayer.

GRANT me, O Jesus, to know what thou art in thyself, and what thou art to me, that my heart may be penetrated with thy holy fear and love. Shall I be so ungrateful and so unjust as to give my heart to any other but thee, my God, or to rely on any creature in preference to thee? Were I to act thus, how justly should I deserve to be miserable both for time and eternity! While I suffice for thee, shalt thou be insufficient for me? No, blessed Jesus, let it not be thus with me; I desire only thee and the accomplishment of thy holy will; this shall be my happiness for ever. Amen.



Chapter Forty-sixth.

Of having confidence in God, when words arise against us.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, stand firm, and trust in me; for what are words but words? They fly through the air, but hurt not a stone.

If thou art guilty, think that thou wilt willingly amend thyself.

If thy conscience accuse thee not, think that thou wilt willingly suffer this for God's sake.

It is a small matter that thou shouldst sometimes bear with words, if thou hast not as yet the courage to endure hard stripes.

And why do such small things go to thy heart; but because thou art yet carnal, and regardest men more than thou oughtest.

For because thou art afraid of being despised, thou art not willing to be reprehended for thy faults, and seekest to shelter thyself in excuses.

II. But look better into thyself, and thou shalt find that the world is still living in thee, and a vain desire of pleasing men:

For when thou art unwilling to be humbled and confounded for thy defects, it is plain indeed that thou art not truly humble, nor truly dead to the world, nor the world crucified to thee.

But give ear to my word, and thou shalt not value ten thousand words of men.

Behold, if all should be said against thee, which the malice of men can invent, what hurt could it do thee, if thou would let it pass, and make no account of it? Could it even so much as pluck one hair from thee?

III. But he who has not his heart *within*, nor God before his eyes, is easily moved with a word of dispraise.

Whereas he that trusts in me, and desires not to stand by his own judgment, will be free from the fear of men.

For I am the judge and discerner of all secrets; I know how the matter passeth; I know both him that offers the injury, and him that suffers it.

From me this word went forth; by my permission it happened, *that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed.* Luke ii.

I shall judge the guilty and the innocent; but by a secret judgment I would beforehand try them both.

IV. The testimony of men oftentimes deceives: my judgment is true, it shall stand and not be overthrown.

It is hidden for the most part, and to few laid open in every thing; yet it never errs, nor can it err, though to the eyes of fools it seems not right.

To me therefore must thou run in every judgment, and not depend upon thy own will.

For the just man will not be troubled, whatever happens to him from God. Prov. xii.

And if any thing be wrongfully pronounced against him, he will not much care;

Neither will he vainly rejoice, if by others he be reasonably excused:

For he considers, *that I am he that searcheth the heart and the reins;* (Apoc. ii.) who

judge not according to the face, nor according to human appearance:

For oftentimes that is found blameworthy in my eyes, which in the judgment of men is esteemed commendable.

[*Disciple.*] V. O Lord God, the just Judge, strong and patient, who knowest the frailty and perverseness of men, be thou my strength, and all my confidence, for my own conscience sufficeth me not.

Thou knowest that which I know not; and therefore in every reprehension I ought to humble myself, and bear it with meekness.

Pardon me, I beseech thee, in thy mercy, as often as I have not done thus, and give me again the grace to suffer still more.

For better to me is thy great mercy, for the obtaining of pardon, than the justice which I imagine in myself for the defence of my hidden conscience.

Although my conscience accuse me not, yet I cannot hereby justify myself; for setting thy mercy aside, *no man living shall be justified in thy sight.* Ps. cxlii.

Practical Reflections.

It is difficult to suppress our emotions, when we are blamed, reprimanded or contemned. But true christian humility consists in not entertaining nor expressing the resentment we at first experience; that is, it con-

sists 1st, in not indulging ill-natured and contemptuous reflections upon those who despise us ; 2ndly, in stifling the mortification they occasion us, and in offering it as a sacrifice to God ; 3rdly, in behaving kindly towards them, speaking to them and rendering them services as occasions may occur, and in doing them as much good as we think they have done us harm. But, alas, how few practise this true humility, and make a good use of contradictions and contempt, although all believe that without true humility, it is impossible to be saved !

Prayer.

How little, O God ! is a true christian affected, one who fears and loves thee above all things, how little is he affected by the judgments of men, and how much concerned as to the judgment thou wilt one day pass upon him ! When present before thee, in the most holy sacrament, I will ask, how do I stand with thee ? What am I in thy sight ? What will be my eternal lot ? With such thoughts let me die to the desire of the esteem and to the fear of the contempt of men, that I may seek only to find favour with thee. Amen.

Chapter Forty-seventh.

That all grievous things are to be endured for life everlasting.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, be not dismayed with the labours which thou hast undertaken for me; neither let the tribulations which befall thee quite cast thee down; but let my promise strengthen thee, and comfort thee in all events.

I am sufficient to reward thee beyond all measure.

Thou shalt not labour here long, nor shalt thou be always oppressed with sorrows.

Wait a little while, and thou shalt see a speedy end of all thy evils.

The hour will come when labour and trouble shall be no more.

All is little and short which passeth away with time.

II. Mind what thou art about; labour faithfully in my vineyard; I will be thy reward.

Write, read, sing, sigh, keep silence, pray, bear thy crosses manfully: eternal life is worthy of all these, and greater combats.

Peace shall come in one day, which is known to the Lord: and it shall not be a vicissitude of day and night, such as is at present;

but everlasting light, infinite brightness, steadfast peace, and secure rest.

Thou shalt not then say: *Who shall deliver me from the body of this death.* Rom. vii. Nor shalt thou cry out; *Woe to me, for that my sojourning is prolonged.* Ps. cxix. For death shall be no more, but never-failing health: no anxiety, but blessed delight, and a society sweet and lovely.

III. O! if thou hadst seen the everlasting crowns of the saints in heaven, and in how great glory they now triumph, who appeared contemptible heretofore to this world, and in a manner even unworthy of life, doubtless thou wouldst immediately cast thyself down to the very earth, and wouldst rather seek to be under the feet of all, than to have command over so much as one. Neither wouldst thou covet the pleasant days of this life, but wouldst rather be glad to suffer tribulation for God's sake, and esteem it thy greatest gain to be reputed as nothing amongst men.

Ah! if thou didst but relish these things, and didst suffer them to penetrate deeply into thy heart, how wouldst thou dare so much as once to complain!

Are not all painful labours to be endured for everlasting life?

It is no small matter to lose or gain the kingdom of God.

Lift up therefore thy face to heaven. Behold I, and all my saints with me, who:

this world have had a great conflict, do now rejoice, are comforted now, are now secure, are now at rest, and they shall for all eternity abide with me in the kingdom of my Father.

Practical Reflections.

How hard is this saying; that salvation is only to be obtained by a life of continual sufferings, by constantly fighting against and by ever renouncing and dying to ourselves! But how are we encouraged to submit to such a course, by the hope and assurance of eternal happiness, which will be the reward we shall receive in exchange for the disappointments and miseries of this present time. Nothing will afford us such great consolation at the hour of death, as the good use we have made of sufferings: then shall we find that we have done nothing purely for God, but what we have done contrary to ourselves, and that a truly christian life must necessarily be a life of crosses and self-denials.

Prayer.

As O God, we believe and hope for the good things of eternity, grant that we may so use the transitory miseries of this life, as to obtain the permanent felicity of the next. At the hour of death, what shall we not wish to have done, to have suffered, and renounc-

L

ed for the sake of obtaining heaven ! Instil, O Lord, into our hearts something of the desires we shall then entertain to no purpose, that we may now really renounce and die to ourselves. Grant we may never consider anything as great but what is eternal, and regard all that passes away with time, as little and contemptible. O happiness ! O joy ! O eternal felicity ! console us under the afflictions of our mortal course. And since we must of necessity repent either in time or for all eternity, suffer either in this life, or in the next, grant us, we beseech thee, O Jesus, patiently to endure all present evils, in hopes of obtaining future bliss and happiness. Amen.



Chapter Forty-eighth.

Of the day of eternity, and of the miseries of this life.

[*Disciple.*] I. O MOST' happy mansion of the city above ! O most bright day of eternity, which knows no night, but is always enlightened by the Sovereign Truth ! a day always joyful, always secure, and never changing its state for the contrary !

O that this day would shine upon us, and all those temporal things would come to an end !

It shines indeed upon the saints, resplen-

lent with everlasting brightness; but to us pilgrims upon earth it is seen only as afar off, and through a glass.

II. The citizens of heaven know how joyful that day is; but the banished children of Eve lament that this our day is bitter and tedious.

The days of this life are short and evil, full of sorrows and miseries: where man is defiled with many sins, is ensnared with many passions, attacked with many fears, disquieted with many cares, distracted with many curiosities, entangled with many vanities, encompassed with many errors, broken with many labours, troubled with temptations, weakened with delights, tormented with want.

III. O! when will there be an end of these evils? When shall I be set at liberty from the wretched slavery of sin?

When, O Lord, shall I be so happy as to think of thee alone? When shall I to the full rejoice in thee?

When shall I be without any impediment in true liberty, without any trouble of mind or body?

When shall I enjoy a solid peace never to be disturbed and always secure, a peace both within and without, and a peace every way firm?

O good Jesus, when shall I stand to behold thee?

When shall I contemplate the glory of thy

kingdom? When wilt thou be *all in all* to me? O when shall I be with thee in thy kingdom, which thou hast prepared for thy beloved for all eternity?

I am left a poor and banished man in an enemy's country, where there are wars every day, and very great misfortunes.

IV. Comfort me in my banishment, assuage my sorrow; for all my desire is after thee: and all that this world offers for my comfort is burthensome to me.

I long to enjoy thee intimately, but cannot attain to it.

I desire to cleave to heavenly things, but the things of this life and my unmortified passions bear me down. I am willing in *mind* to be above all things, but by the flesh am obliged against my will to be subject to them.

Thus, unhappy man that I am, I fight with myself, and am become burthensome to myself, whilst the spirit seeks to tend upwards, and the flesh downwards.

V. O what do I suffer interiorly, whilst in my mind I consider heavenly things, and presently a crowd of carnal thoughts offers to interrupt my prayer! *O my God, remove not thyself far from me, and depart not in thy wrath from thy servant.*

Dart forth thy lightning, and disperse them: shoot thy arrows, and let all the phantoms of the enemy be put to flight.

Gather my senses together to thee; make

me forget all worldly things; give me the grace speedily to cast away and to despise all wicked imaginations.

Come to my aid, O eternal Truth, that no vanity may move me.

Come, heavenly sweetness, and let all impurity fly from before thy face.

Pardon me also, and mercifully forgive me the times that I have thought of any thing else in prayer besides thee.

For I confess truly, that I am accustomed to be very much distracted:

For oftentimes I am not there, where I am bodily standing or sitting, but am rather there where my thoughts carry me.

There I am where my thought is; and there oftentimes is my thought, where that is which I love.

That thing most readily comes to my mind, which naturally delights me, or which through custom is pleasing to me.

VL For this reason thou, who art the *Truth*, has plainly said, *where thy treasure is, there also is thy heart*. Matt. vi.

If I love heaven, I willingly think on heavenly things.

If I love the world, I rejoice in the prosperity of the world, and am troubled at its adversity.

If I love the flesh, my imagination is often taken up with the things of the flesh.

If I love the spirit, I delight to think of spiritual things.

For whatsoever things I love, of the same I willingly speak and hear, and carry home with me the images of them.

But blessed is the man, who for thee, O Lord, lets go all things created; who offers violence to his nature, and through fervour of spirit crucifies the lusts of the flesh; that so his conscience being cleared up, he may offer to thee *pure* prayer, and may be worthy to be admitted among the choirs of angels, having shut out all things of the earth both from without and within.

Practical Reflections.

WHAT will it avail us to suffer and to deplore the miseries of this life, and to sigh after the good things of the next, if we do not endeavour to receive our present tribulations with patience, as coming from the hand of God, and with humility as having deserved them; if we strive not to obtain that eternal happiness, after which we sigh, by constant fidelity? O happy day! O eternal joy! O infinite, unchangeable happiness! O establishment! O mansion! O plentitude of God in us and of us in God! O transformation of a blessed soul into its God and its all! When shall I possess thee? Weary of myself and of the inefficacy of my desires, I ardently long for thee, O Paradise! and yet how little do I do to obtain thy eternal

happiness! Let us join, my soul, let us add to the esteem we have of paradise our exertions to obtain it. Let us regard it as a crown which can only be obtained by offering a holy violence to ourselves, and as a recompense to be earned only by a supernatural life.

Prayer.

WHEN, O God, shall I withdraw my heart from all things visible and terrestrial, and give my whole self to thee, my sovereign and invisible good? When shalt thou alone become my consolation and the only happiness of my soul? When shall I see in thee, my Saviour, what I now believe? When shall I possess what I love? When shall I find what I seek? Comfort me in this my exile, support me in my sufferings, strengthen me in my weakness. Come, O Jesus, come into my soul, by thy grace, thy presence and thy love. Take possession of my heart, that it may never more be separated from thee. I languish, I sigh, and burn with the desire of beholding thee face to face in thy glory. O when shall faith be lost in vision, and hope swallowed up in fruition?

How burthensome is this life to a soul that loves only thee, my Saviour! and how cruel a martyrdom to support it! No, Lord, I can no longer live without loving thee, nor

love thee as I desire, without seeing thee! Terminate therefore my anguish, by closing my life. Speak my soul, speak to thy God; but rather, O God, do thou speak to my heart, that it may die to itself, and live only to thee. Amen.



Chapter Forty-ninth.

Of the desire of eternal life; and how great things are promised to them that fight.

Christ.] I. SON, when thou perceivest a longing after eternal bliss to be infused into thee from above, and that thou desirest to go out of the dwelling of this body, that thou mayest contemplate my brightness, without any shadow of change, dilate thy heart, and with all thy affection embrace this holy inspiration.

Return very great thanks to the divine bounty, which deals so favourably with thee, which mercifully visits thee, ardently incites thee, and powerfully raises thee up, lest by thy own weight thou fall down to the things of the earth.

For it is not by thy own thought or endeavour that thou attainest to this; but only by the favour of heavenly grace and the divine visit: that so thou mayest advance in

virtues and greater humility, and prepare thyself for future conflicts, and labour with the whole affection of thy heart to keep close to me, and serve me with a fervent will.

II. Son, the fire often burns, but the flame ascends not without smoke.

So also some people's desires are on fire after heavenly things, and yet they are not free from the temptation of fleshly affection.

And therefore it is not altogether purely for God's honour, that they do what they so earnestly request of him.

Such also is oftentimes thy desire, which thou hast signified to be so strong.

For that is not pure and perfect which is infected with self-interest.

III. Ask not what is delightful and commodious for thee, but what is pleasing and honourable to me : for if thou judgest rightly, thou oughtest to follow my appointment rather than thy own desire, and to prefer it before all that thou desirest.

I know thy desire, and I have often heard thy sighs.

Thou wouldst be glad to be at present in the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

Thou wouldst be pleased to be now at thy eternal home, and in thy heavenly country abounding with joy : but that hour is not yet come : for this is yet another time, *viz.* a time of war, a time of labour and trial.

Thou wishest to be replenished with the Sovereign Good, but thou canst not at present attain to it.

I am that Sovereign Good; wait for me, till the kingdom of God comes.

IV. Thou must yet be tried upon earth, and exercised in many things.

Consolation shall sometimes be given thee; but to be fully satisfied shall not be granted thee.

Take courage therefore, and be valiant, as well in doing as in suffering things repugnant to nature.

Thou must put on the new man, and be changed into another man.

Thou must oftentimes do that which is against thy inclination, and let alone that which thou art inclined to.

That which is pleasing to others shall go forward; that which thou wouldst have shall not succeed.

That which others say shall be hearkened to; what thou sayest shall not be regarded.

Others shall ask, and shall receive; thou shalt ask, and not obtain.

V. Others shall be great in the esteem of men; but of thee no notice shall be taken.

To others this or that shall be committed; but thou shalt be accounted fit for nothing.

At this, nature will sometimes repine, and it will be no small matter if thou bear it with silence.

In these and many such like things the faithful servant of the Lord is used to be tried, how far he can renounce himself, and break himself in all things.

There is scarce any one thing in which thou standest so much in need of mortifying thyself, as in seeing and suffering the things which are repugnant to thy will; and especially when that is commanded which seems to thee incongruous and to little purpose.

And because being under authority thou darest not resist the higher power, therefore thou art apt to think it hard to walk at the beck of another, and wholly to give up thy own sentiment.

VI. But consider, son, the fruit of these labours, how quickly they will end, and their exceeding great reward, and thou wilt not be troubled at them, but strongly comforted in thy suffering.

For in regard to that little of thy will, which thou now willingly forsakest, thou shalt for ever have thy will in heaven.

For there thou shalt find all that thou wilt, all that thou canst desire.

There thou shalt enjoy all good, without fear of ever losing it.

There thy will being always one with mine, shall desire nothing foreign or private.

There no one shall resist thee, no man shall complain of thee, no man shall hinder thee, nothing shall stand in thy way: but

all that thou desirest shall be there together present, and shall replenish thy whole affection, and satiate it to the full.

There I will give thee glory for the affronts which thou hast suffered; a garment of praise for thy sorrow; and for thy having been seated here, in the lowest place, a royal throne for all eternity.

There will the fruit of obedience appear, there will the labour of penance rejoice, and humble subjection shall be gloriously crowned.

VII. Bow down thyself then humbly at present under the hands of all, and heed not who it was that has said or commanded this.

But let it be thy great care, that whether thy superior or inferior, or equal, desire anything of thee, or hint at anything, thou take all in good part, and labour with a sincere will to perform it.

Let one man seek this, another that; let this man glory in this thing, another in that, and be praised a thousand thousand times: but thou, for thy part, rejoice neither in this, nor in that, but in the contempt of thyself, and in my good pleasure and honour alone.

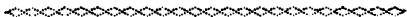
This is what thou oughtest to wish, that whether in life or death, God may be always glorified in thee.

Practical Reflections.

WE are unwilling to suffer the trials which God sends us, and would receive nothing from him, but continual consolations; these however are only given to support us under dryness and desolation of spirit; he imparts them to us to enable us to support his apparent rigour, which in reality is his goodness towards us, by which he spares not in time, that he may be merciful to us for eternity. Think not therefore that thou art rejected by God, when thou dost experience nothing but disgust in his service; but do faithfully whatever thou wouldst then do to please him, if thou didst experience the greatest delight in serving him, and it shall be well with thee. Humble thyself on such occasions, think thyself unworthy of the least consolation or support. The Lord is pleased that thou shouldst serve him without any sensible comfort, and by this means conquer thy repugnance to good, and thy inclination for evil, through a pure desire of pleasing him, and a real dread of offending him. Ah! how abundantly will a happy eternity repay thee for the sufferings and fatigues of this life, if thou wilt but bear them now with confidence, fidelity, and patience! Take courage then, my soul, a moment's suffering is eternal joy.

Prayer.

GRANT, O Lord, that my whole delight may be to please thee, and to do and to suffer whatever thou willest. No, my God, I ask no other consolation but the happiness of being faithful to thee, because I desire to love thee more for thyself than on my own account. May thy love, O God, triumph over all the pursuits and repugnances of self-love! Mayest thou be all to me in time, that thou mayest be my all for eternity. Amen.



Chapter Fiftieth.

How a desolate person ought to offer himself into the hands of God.

[*Disciple.*] I. O LORD God, O holy Father, be thou now and for ever blessed; for as thou wilt, so it has happened: and what thou dost is always good.

Let thy servant rejoice in thee, not in himself, nor in any other: for thou alone art true Joy, thou my Hope and my Crown, thou my Gladness and my Honour, O Lord.

What hath thy servant but what he hath received from thee, and this without any merit on his side? All things are thine

which thou hast given, and which thou hast made.

I am poor, and in my labours from my youth: and my soul is grieved even unto tears sometimes, and sometimes is disturbed within herself by reason of the passions which encompass her.

II. I long for the joy of peace; I beg for the peace of thy children, who are fed by thee in the light of thy consolation.

If thou givest peace, if thou infusest holy joy, the soul of thy servant shall be full of melody, and devout in thy praise.

But if thou withdraw thyself, as thou art very often accustomed to do, he will not be able to run in the way of thy commandments; but rather must bow down his knees, and strike his breast, because it is not with him as it was yesterday, and the day before, when thy lamp shined over his head, and he was covered under the shadow of thy wings from temptations rushing in upon him.

III. O just Father, holy and always to be praised, the hour is come for thy servant to be tried.

O Father, worthy of all love, it is fitting that thy servant should at this hour suffer something for thee.

O Father, always to be honoured, the hour is come which thou didst foresee from all eternity:

That thy servant for a short time should

be oppressed *without*, but always live *within* to thee; that he should be a little slighted, and humbled, and should fall in the sight of men; that he should be severely afflicted with sufferings and diseases, that so he may rise again with thee in the dawning of the new light, and be glorified in heaven.

O holy Father, thou hast so appointed, and such is thy will; and that has come to pass which thou hast ordained.

IV. For this is a favour to thy friend, that he should suffer and be afflicted in this world, for the love of thee; how often soever, and by whomsoever, thou permittest it to fall upon him.

Without thy counsel and providence, and without cause, nothing is done upon earth.

It is good for me, O Lord, that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thy justification, (Ps. cxviii.) and that I may cast away from me all pride of heart and presumption.

It is advantageous for me that shame has covered my face, that I may rather seek my comfort from thee, than from men.

I have also learnt hereby to fear thy impenetrable judgments, who afflictest the just together with the wicked, but not without equity and justice.

V. Thanks be to thee, that thou hast not spared me in my sufferings, but hast bruised me with bitter stripes, inflicting pains, and sending distress both within and without.

And of all things under heaven, there is none can comfort me but thou, O Lord, my God, the heavenly Physician of souls, *who woundest and healest, bringest down to hell, and ledest back again.*

Thy discipline is on me, and thy rod shall instruct me.

VI. Behold, dear Father, I am in thy hands, I bow myself down under the rod of thy correction.

Strike thou my back and my neck, that I may bend my crookedness to thy will.

Make me a pious and humble disciple of thine, as thou wert wont well to do, that I may walk at thy beck at all times.

To thee I commit myself, and all that is mine, to be corrected by thee: it is better to be chastised here than hereafter.

Thou knowest every thing, and there is nothing in man's conscience hidden from thee.

Thou knowest things to come before they are done: and thou hast no need to be taught or admonished by any one of those things that pass upon earth.

Thou knowest what is expedient for my progress, and how serviceable tribulation is to rub away the rust of sin.

Do with me according to thy good pleasure; it is what I desire; and despise not my sinful life, to no one better or more clearly known than to thyself alone.

VII. Grant, O Lord, that I may know

what I ought to know; that I may love what I ought to love; that I may praise that which is most pleasing to thee; that I may esteem that which is valuable in thy sight; that I may despise that which is despicable in thy eyes.

Suffer me not to judge according to the sight of the outward eye, nor to give sentence according to the hearing of the ears of men, that know not what they are about; but to determine both of visible and spiritual matters with *true* judgment, and above all things ever to seek thy good will and pleasure.

VIII. The sentiments of men are often wrong in their judgments; and the lovers of this world are deceived in loving visible things alone.

What is a man the better for being reputed greater by man?

One deceitful man deceiveth another; the vain deceives the vain, the blind deceives the blind, the weak the weak, whilst he extols him; and in truth, doth rather confound him, whilst he vainly praiseth him.

For how much each one is in thy eyes, so much he is, and no more, saith the humble St. Francis.

Practical Reflections.

As God is the sovereign purity and the essence of sanctity, so he is pleased to purify our souls by the most painful and humiliat-

ing sufferings in this life, and by torments the most acute and piercing in purgatory, to fit them for the possession of himself in the kingdom of heaven. By these means he brings them to that degree of purity which is necessary to qualify them for the eternal and happy possession of his sanctity. Hence, that which constitutes the conformity of a faithful soul, with the designs of God for its sanctification and salvation, is, 1st, to live in such purity of heart as to avoid all wilful sin, all human attachments, and above all, the pursuits of self-love, habitual faults, and self-will; 2ndly, it is to be ready to receive from Jesus Christ the most humiliating trials, and whatever is most contrary to its own inclinations; 3rdly, it is to support and to fight without ceasing, against the most violent and importunate temptations, by having perpetual recourse to God, with a firm confidence in his goodness; 4thly, in all sufferings, it is to keep up a continual spirit of compunction, mortification and of a horror for sin, which will preserve us from falling into it; 5thly, it is to be most diligent in keeping a guard over the senses and the heart, that no sensual or merely human satisfaction may enter in; 6thly, it is to be humble, dependent, little and nothing before God, to desire nothing but his will, and to rejoice in its accomplishment, even under the pressure of the heaviest calamities.

Prayer.

ALTHOUGH I am convinced, O God, of the necessity of being humble, faithful and resigned in afflictions; yet to excuse my impatience, how often do I pretend that it is the result of a religious fear and anxiety, lest these trials should end in sin, instead of victory. But dost thou not know better than I do, O father of mercies, and God of all consolation? dost thou not see this danger? and is not this sufficient to induce thee, the best of fathers, to assist me? Alas! O Lord, abandon me not, and deliver me not to the desires of my corrupt heart. Remember, O Jesus, how much I have cost thee, and suffer not thy torments and death to plead for me in vain. I ardently desire that peace which thou givest to thy children, and I find nothing within me but trouble and agitation. Why am I so opposed to good, and so much inclined to evil? Why is my soul so frequently bewildered, amidst the irregular demands of my passions, and carried by its first impulse, towards everything that is contrary to thy holy will? I mourn over the corruption of my heart, and from thee alone, do I hope for deliverance. It is just I should suffer, on account of my sins; but it is not just I should sin in my sufferings. May I never offend thee, and ruin myself, by impatience

under afflictions, but, O God, grant that by them I may sanctify my soul and secure my salvation. Amen.



Chapter Fifty-first.

That we must exercise ourselves in humble works. when we cannot attain to high things.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, thou canst not alway continue in the most fervent desire of virtue, nor stand in the highest degree of contemplation; but it must needs be that thou sometimes descend to lower things, by reason of original corruption; and that thou bear the burden of this corruptible life, even against thy will, and with irksomeness.

As long as thou carriest about with thee thy mortal body, thou shalt feel trouble and heaviness of heart.

Thou oughtest therefore, as long as thou art in the flesh, oftentimes to bewail the burthen of the flesh; for that thou canst not without intermission be employed in spiritual exercises and divine contemplation.

II. At these times it is expedient for thee to fly to humble and exterior works, and to recreate thyself in good actions; to look for my coming and my heavenly visitation with an assured hope; to bear with patience thy

banishment, and the aridity of thy mind, till thou be visited again by me, and delivered from all anguish.

For I will make thee forget thy pains, and enjoy eternal rest.

I will lay open before thee the pleasant fields of the scriptures, that thy heart being dilated, thou mayest begin to run in the way of my commandments.

And then thou shalt say, that *the sufferings of this time have no proportion with the future glory, which shall be revealed in us.* Rom. viii.

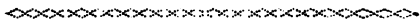
Practical Reflections.

How great is the difference between the sanctity of the blessed in heaven, and of men upon earth! the one is exempt from pain and full of sweetness, the other is replete with bitterness and misery; the one belongs to that delightful abode our true country, the other is our portion in this vale of tears. In eternity, we shall love God in possessing him and enjoying his felicity; in time we must love him by suffering for his sake, and patiently carrying the cross of Jesus Christ. There, we shall be happy in God, and secure of his love for ever; here, we know not whether we be worthy of love or hatred. In the time of spiritual dryness and desolation, let us employ ourselves in doing something ex-

teriorly for God, since we find nothing within that sensibly calls us to him; but at the same time let us not neglect any of the interior exercises of prayer, recollection, and continual recourse to God, for his support and assistance.

Prayer.

O MY God! how long shall my sorrowful and rigorous exile keep me at a distance from thee, uncertain as to my eternal happiness, and even in danger of losing it? How am I ashamed of appearing in thy presence, miserable, weak, and defiled with sin! Turn not, O Lord, thy face away from me; for there is no consolation but in thy presence. Recall me O God, recall me to thyself by interior recollection; and may it supply the want of thy glorious presence, and console me when I think of thee, and of the misery of not being able to see and to possess thee! Amen.



Chapter Fifty-second.

That a man ought not to esteem himself worthy of consolation, but rather deserving of stripes.

[*Disciple.*] I. Lord, I am not worthy of thy consolation, or any spiritual visitation; and therefore thou dealest justly with me, when thou leavest me poor and desolate.

For if I could shed tears like a sea, yet should I not be worthy of thy comfort,

Since I have deserved nothing but stripes and punishment, because I have grievously and often offended thee, and in very many things sinned against thee.

Therefore according to all just reason I have not deserved the least of thy comforts.

But thou who art a good and merciful God, who wilt not have thy works perish, to shew the riches of thy goodness towards the vessels of mercy, vouchsafest beyond all his deserts to comfort thy servant above human measure.

For thy consolations are not like the consolations of men.

II. What have I done, O Lord, that thou shouldst impart thy heavenly comfort to me?

I can remember nothing of good that ever I have done; but that I was always prone to vice, and very slothful to amend.

It is the truth, and I cannot deny it. If I should say otherwise, thou wouldst stand against me, and there would be none to defend me.

What have I deserved for my sins, but hell and everlasting fire? In truth I confess that I am worthy of all scorn and contempt, neither is it fitting that I should be named among thy devout servants. And though it goes against me to hear this, yet for truth's sake I will condemn myself for my sins, that so I may the easier obtain thy mercy.

III. What shall I say, who am guilty and full of all confusion?

I have not the face to say any thing but this one word: I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned; have mercy on me, and pardon me.

Suffer me a little, that I may mourn out my grief, before I go to the darksome land that is covered with the dismal shade of death. Job x.

What dost thou chiefly require of a guilty and wretched sinner, but that he should heartily repent, and humble himself for his sins.

In true contrition and humility of heart is brought forth hope of forgiveness; a troubled conscience is reconciled; grace that was lost is recovered; a man is secured from the wrath to come, and God meets the penitent soul in the holy kiss of peace.

IV. Humble contrition for sins is an acceptable sacrifice to thee, O Lord; of far greater odour in my sight than the burning of frankincense.

This is also that pleasing ointment which thou wouldst have to be poured upon thy sacred feet. *For thou never yet hast despised a contrite and humble heart.* Ps. 1.

Here is a sure place of refuge from the face of the wrath of the enemy. Here whatever has been elsewhere contracted of uncleanness is amended and washed away.

Practical Reflections.

ALTHOUGH we should consider ourselves in all our sufferings, as most unworthy of receiving consolation from God, and as deserving of the heaviest chastisements, having so often merited hell, it is good nevertheless, to bewail our exile, and to sigh, in the sense of our miseries, for the father of mercy, and the God of all consolation; for a cry or lamentation from a soul penetrated with gratitude to God for his goodness, and with a deep sorrow for having offended him, is capable of disarming his anger, and of inclining him to mercy and pardon.

How is a soul when loaded with the weight of its iniquities, consoled by the certainty of meeting with mercy from God, when it returns to him with sincere sorrow

for sin, and a firm and effectual resolution of renouncing it, and leading a better life, for the future ! Then does God, who is more desirous to pardon us than we are to crave his mercy, cease to be our Judge, and become our Father. Forgetting what we were, he remembers only what we now are, and treats us with as much bounty, as though we had never offended him.

Prayer.

GIVE me, O God, that sincere sorrow and contrition which may purge away all my offences. I can commit sin of myself, but I cannot repent nor free myself from it without thy grace and assistance. Yes, Father, I have sinned, and have offended thy goodness ; and this fills me with grief and confusion. Chastise me, but forgive me, and let my punishment be to love thee, and to hate myself. I have sinned against heaven, and before thee ; I am not worthy to be numbered amongst thy children ; receive me as one of thy servants. Then, happy shall I be, if, feeding upon the bread of tears, living in labour, in a reverential fear of thee, and in an exact obedience to thy will, I pass my life in mourning and sighing, in punishing myself and avenging thee, endeavouring never to pardon in myself what thou art so willing to forgive me ! Take away my

life from me, O my Saviour, or keep me from sin, for I can no longer live to offend thee. Grant that I may frequently recollect this my desire, and that the remembrance of it may ever withhold me from displeasing thee. Amen.



Chapter Fifty-third.

That the grace of God is not communicated to the earthly-minded.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, my grace is precious; it suffers not itself to be mingled with external things, or earthly consolations.

Thou must therefore cast away every obstacle to grace, if thou desire to have it infused into thee.

Chuse a secret place to thyself; love to dwell with thyself alone; seek not to be talking with any one; but rather pour forth devout prayers to God, that thou mayest keep thy mind in compunction, and thy conscience clean.

Esteem the whole world as nothing: prefer the attendance on God before all external things.

For thou canst not both attend to me, and at the same time delight thyself in transitory things.

Thou must be sequestered from thy acquaintance, and from those that are dear to thee, and keep thy mind disengaged from all temporal comfort.

So the blessed apostle Peter beseeches the faithful of Christ to keep themselves *as strangers and pilgrims in this world*. 1 Peter ii.

II. O how great confidence shall he have at the hour of his death, who is not detained by an affection to any thing in the world?

But an infirm soul is not yet capable of having a heart thus perfectly disengaged from all things, neither doth the sensual man understand the liberty of an internal man.

But if he will be *spiritual* indeed, he must renounce as well those that are near him, as those that are afar off, and beware of none more than of himself.

If thou perfectly overcomest thyself thou shalt with more ease subdue all things else.

The perfect victory is to triumph over one's self.

For he that keeps himself in subjection, so that his sensuality is ever subject to reason, and reason in all things obedient to me, he is indeed a conqueror of himself, and lord of all the world.

III. If thou desire to mount thus high, thou must begin manfully, and set the axe to the root, that thou mayest root out and destroy thy secret inordinate inclination to thyself, and to all selfish and earthly goods.

This vice, by which a man inordinately loves himself, is at the bottom of all that which is to be rooted out and overcome in thee: which evil being once conquered and brought under, a great peace and tranquillity will presently ensue.

But because there are few that labour to die perfectly to themselves, and that fully tend beyond themselves; therefore do they remain entangled in themselves, nor can they be elevated in spirit above themselves.

But he that desires to walk freely with me, must mortify all his wicked and irregular affections, and must not cleave to any thing created with any concupiscence or private love.

Practical Reflections.

To withdraw the heart from ourselves and all created things, we should 1st, frequently raise our affections to God, and endeavour to love him in and above all things; 2ndly, we should renounce all voluntary attachments to creatures and to self-seeking; 3rdly, we should separate and wean ourselves from all that is naturally pleasing to us, by regarding all things as passing away, and ourselves as pilgrims and strangers in a foreign land, who must allow themselves no delay in their journey, but pass forward on their way.

When thoroughly impressd with these

words of the apostle : *We have not a permanent dwelling place here, but we look for one above* : how little does a christian feel attached to the goods, the vanities, and pleasures of this world, knowing that all these things pass away, and must finally end in death ! It is easy, says St. Jerome, to despise all earthly things, when we reflect that we must die and leave them all behind us.

Why then, does the figure of this world which passes away and escapes from our sight, make so deep an impression upon our hearts, and the good things of eternity, which alone never fade, affect us so little ? Why should we be so strongly attached to what we possess but for a moment, and hold only in trust, and so little attracted by that which is destined to be ours, and for ever, an eternity of happiness ?

Prayer.

GRANT, O Lord, that my heart may loathe all earthly things, and cleave to those alone which are eternal, which will be given to me in exchange for the little I renounce in this world, for the love of thee. Grant me, O God, to love only that which I shall love for ever, and to esteem everything as unworthy of a christian soul, which is not the eternal and sovereign good.

“How little does this world appear,” said St. Ignatius, “when I view the heavens! and how little do the material heavens and this immense universe appear, when I think of thee, my God!” Grant, that in like manner, when impressed with the idea of thy immensity, I also may yield my whole soul to thee. Amen.



Chapter Fifty-fourth.

Of the different motions of nature and grace.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, observe diligently the motions of *nature* and *grace*; for they move very opposite ways, and very subtilly, and can hardly be distinguished but by a spiritual man, and one that is internally illuminated.

All men indeed aim at *good*, and pretend to something of good in what they do and say: therefore under the appearance of good many are deceived.

II. *Nature* is crafty, and draws away many, ensnares them, and deceives them, and always intends herself for her end.

But *grace* walks with simplicity, declines from all appearance of evil, offers no deceits, and does all things purely for God, in whom also she rests as in her last end.

III. *Nature* is not willing to be mortified,

or to be restrained, or to be overcome, or to be subject: neither will she of her own accord be brought under.

But *grace* studies the mortification of her own self, resists sensuality, seeks to be subject, covets to be overcome, aims not at following her own liberty, loves to be kept under discipline, and desires not to have the command over any one; but under God ever to live, stand, and be; and for God's sake is ever ready humbly to bow down herself under all human creatures.

IV. *Nature* labours for her own interest, and considers what gain she may reap from another.

But *grace* considers not what may be advantageous and profitable to herself, but rather what may be profitable to many.

V. *Nature* willingly receives honour and respect:

But *grace* faithfully attributes all honour and glory to God.

VI. *Nature* is afraid of being put to shame and despised:

But *grace* is glad to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.

VII. *Nature* loves idleness and bodily rest:

But *grace* cannot be idle, and willingly embraces labour.

VIII. *Nature* seeks to have things that

M

are curious and fine, and does not care for things that are cheap and coarse:

But *grace* is pleased with that which is plain and humble, rejects not coarse things, nor refuses to be clad in old clothes.

IX. *Nature* has regard to temporal things, rejoices at earthly gain, is troubled at losses, and is provoked at every slight injurious word:

But *grace* attends to things eternal, and cleaves not to those which pass with time; neither is she disturbed at the loss of things, nor exasperated with hard words, for she places her treasure and her joy in heaven, where nothing is lost.

X. *Nature* is covetous, and is more willing to take than to give, and loves to have things to herself:

But *grace* is bountiful and open-hearted, avoids selfishness, is contented with little, and judges it *more happy to give than to receive*. Acts xx.

XI. *Nature* inclines to creatures, to her own flesh, to vanities, and to gadding abroad:

But *grace* draws to God and to virtue, renounces creatures, flies the world, hates the desires of the flesh, restrains wandering about, and is ashamed to appear in public.

XII. *Nature* willingly receives exterior comfort, in which she may be sensibly delighted:

But *grace* seeks to be comforted in God

alone, and beyond all things visible to be delighted in the Sovereign Good.

XIII. *Nature* doth all for her own lucre and interest; she can do nothing *gratis*, but hopes to gain something equal, or better, or praise, or favour for her good deeds; and covets to have her actions and gifts much valued:

But *grace* seeks nothing temporal, nor requires any other recompense but God alone for her reward, nor desires any thing more of the necessaries of this life than may be serviceable for the obtaining a happy eternity.

XIV. *Nature* rejoices in a multitude of friends and kindred; she glories in the nobility of her stock and descent; she fawns on them that are in power, flatters the rich, and applauds such as are like herself:

But *grace* loves even her enemies, and is not puffed up with having a great many friends, nor has any value for family or birth, unless when joined with greater virtue: she rather favours the poor than the rich; she has more compassion for the innocent than the powerful; she rejoices with him that loves the truth, and not with the deceitful; she ever exhorts the good to be zealous for better gifts, and to become like to the Son of God by the exercise of virtues.

XV. *Nature* easily complains of want and of trouble:

But *grace* bears poverty with constancy.

XVI. *Nature* turns all things to herself, and for herself she labours and disputes:

But *grace* refers all things to God, from whom all originally proceed: she attributes no good to herself, nor does she arrogantly presume of herself: she does not contend, nor prefer her own opinion to others, but in every sense and understanding she submits herself to the external wisdom, and to the divine examination.

XVII. *Nature* covets to know secrets, and to hear news; is willing to appear abroad, and to have experience of many things by the senses; desires to be taken notice of, and to do such things as may procure praise and admiration:

But *grace* cares not for the hearing of news and curious things, because all this springs from the old corruption, since nothing is new or lasting upon earth.

She teaches therefore to restrain the senses, to avoid vain complacency and ostentation, humbly to hide those things which are worthy of praise and admiration, and from every thing, and in every knowledge, to seek the fruit of spiritual profit, and the praise and honour of God.

She desires not to have herself or what belongs to her, extolled; but wishes that God may be blessed in his gifts, who bestows all through mere love.

XVIII. This *grace* is a supernatural light, and a certain special gift of God, and the proper mark of the elect, and pledge of eternal salvation, which elevates a man from the things of the earth to the love of heavenly things, and of carnal, makes him spiritual.

Wherefore by how much the more, *nature* is kept down and subdued, with so much the greater abundance *grace* is infused; and the inward man, by new visitations, is daily more reformed according to the image of God.

Practical Reflections.

WHAT is it to repose in God as in our last end? It is to desire, to seek, and to love only him; it is to do and to suffer all things for his sake; it is to acquiesce without any reserve in his holy designs; it is to will only what he wills; it is never to go astray, nor turn aside from the way of his ordinances; it is, in fine, to place our whole happiness in pleasing him, and in not gratifying ourselves; but to do this, is contrary to nature; grace alone can accomplish it.

I. Nature has always for its object self-satisfaction; but grace leads us to do violence to ourselves, that is, to deny and renounce ourselves in all things.

II. Nature is unwilling to die, to captivate itself, or to be made subject; but grace

captivates the soul, restrains and subjects it to what is most hard and contrary to its inclinations ; so that it gives up its own liberty on all occasions, fights against its own humours, and yields itself to God ; and to honour his sovereign dominion it rejoices in humiliations, restraint and subjection.

III. Nature ever wishes to rule over others ; but grace humbles us under the all-powerful hand of God, and makes us obedient for his love to those whom he has appointed in his place over us.

IV. Nature labours always for its own interest, to please and to establish itself ; but grace labours only for God's sake, and watches incessantly over the motions of the heart, to preserve it from sin, and to enable it to seek only its establishment in Jesus Christ.

V. Nature is pleased with the esteem, and praises of men, presuming on its own deserts : but grace makes us think ourselves unworthy of them, and refers all honour to God ; and is so nice on this head, that it will not permit the humble and faithful soul to make the least voluntary reference of vanity towards itself, lest it should take some degree of complacency in the good which it performs.

VI. Nature is afraid of disappointments, and flies from contempt ; but grace receives these, and willingly endures them as justly inflicted upon us as sinners ; and even makes

us grateful to Jesus Christ for allowing us to share with him what was wont to be the delight of his heart.

VII. Nature loves the repose of a soft, idle, and useless life; but grace seeks only labour; she dreads and avoids all useless thoughts, words and actions; and not being able to endure laziness, either of the heart or mind, she leads the one to be impressed with a sense of the presence of God, and the other to live for his love.

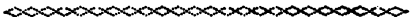
VIII. Nature is attracted by everything that is great, beautiful, splendid, or commendable; but grace despises and shuns all these, and thinks nothing great but what is divine, supernatural and eternal.

The more however, nature is repressed, the more abundantly does grace communicate itself to the soul, renew it in the interior spirit, and establish it perfectly in God.

Prayer.

It is time, O Lord, I should cast myself on thy mercy, to obtain the pardon of my sins, and on thy love, to follow all its attractions. Support me, O Lord, and strengthen me by thy grace, against the inclinations of nature and self-love; for of myself it is impossible to resist and conquer the motions of corrupt nature, which is ever seeking its own gratification, in direct opposition to thy holy

will. Grant us thy grace to rise superior to nature, to correspond faithfully with the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, to conquer and renounce ourselves, that we may be renewed and established in the possession of thy love. Amen.



Chapter Fifty-fifth.

Of the corruption of nature, and of the efficacy of divine grace.

[*Disciple.*] I. O LORD my God, who hast created me to thine own image and likeness, grant me this *grace*, which thou hast declared to be so great, and so necessary to salvation, that I may overcome my corrupt *nature*, which draws me to sin and perdition.

For I perceive in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind, and leading me captive to obey sensuality in many things; neither can I resist the passions thereof, unless assisted by thy holy *grace*, infused copiously into my heart.

II. I stand in need of thy *grace*, and of a great *grace*, to overcome *nature*, which is always prone to evil from her youth:

For the first man, Adam, being corrupted by sin, the punishment of his sin has de-

scended upon all mankind. So that *nature* itself, which by thee was created good and right, is now put for the vice and infirmity of corrupt nature; because the motion thereof, left to itself, draws to evil, and to things below.

For the little strength which remains is but like a spark hidden in the ashes.

This is our *natural reason*, which is surrounded with a great mist, having yet the judgment of good and evil, and of the distance of truth and falsehood, though it be unable to fulfil all that it approves; neither does it now enjoy the full light of truth, nor the former integrity of its affections.

.III. Hence it is, O my God, that according to the inward man I am delighted with thy law, knowing thy command to be good, just, and holy, and reproving all evil and sin, as what ought to be shunned.

And yet in the flesh I serve the law of sin, whilst I rather obey sensuality than reason.

Hence it is, *that to will good is present with me, but how to accomplish it I do not find.* Romans vii.

Hence I often make many good purposes; but because I want grace to help my weakness, through a slight resistance I recoil and fall off.

Hence it comes to pass, that I know the way to perfection, and see clearly enough what it is I ought to do;

But being pressed down with the weight of my own corruption, I rise not to those things which are more perfect.

IV. O how exceedingly necessary is thy *grace* for me, O Lord, to begin that which is good, to go forward with it, and to accomplish it!

For without it I can do nothing. But I can do all things in thee, when thy *grace* strengthens me.

O truly heavenly *grace*, without which we have no merits of our own, neither are any of the gifts of nature to be valued!

No arts, no riches, no beauty or strength, no wit or eloquence, are of any worth with thee, O Lord, without *grace*.

For the gifts of nature are common to the good and bad; but *grace* or divine love is the proper gift of the elect, which they that are adorned with, are esteemed worthy of eternal life.

This *grace* is so excellent, that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the working of miracles, nor any speculation, how sublime soever, is of any value without it.

Nor even faith, nor hope, nor any other virtues, are acceptable to thee without charity and *grace*.

V. O most blessed *grace*, which makest the poor in spirit rich in virtues, and renderest him who is rich in many good things humble of heart.

Come, descend upon me, replenish me betimes with thy consolations, lest my soul faint through weariness and dryness of mind

I beseech thee, O Lord, that I may find *grace* in thy sight; for thy *grace* is enough for me, though I obtain none of those things which nature desires.

If I be tempted, and afflicted with many tribulations, I will fear no evils, whilst thy grace is with me.

She is my strength; she gives counsel and help.

She is more mighty than all my enemies, and wiser than all the wise.

VI. She is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the comforter of affliction, the banisher of sorrow, the expeller of fear, the nurse of devotion, the producer of tears.

What am I without her but a piece of dry wood, and an unprofitable stock, fit for nothing but to be cast away?

Let thy grace, therefore, O Lord, always both go before me and follow me, and make me ever intent upon good works, through Jesus Christ thy Son. Amen.

Practical Reflections.

WE do justice to ourselves when we mistrust our own strength, and to God, when we confide in the assistance of his grace.

This is never wanting to us ; but we are often wanting in our correspondence with it, though the only means of ensuring salvation, is to be faithful to its attractions, for they would lead us to the practice of every virtue.

Human nature having been corrupted by the first man's sin, the effect of this corruption, as well as the stain of sin, descended to all mankind ; hence are we constrained to fight incessantly against the motions of nature, and to follow those of grace. Without offering this holy violence to ourselves, by which we subdue and renounce our own inclinations, it would be impossible to be saved. In the state of innocence all in man being orderly and subject to God, on account of original justice, the passions did not revolt against reason ; but in our present state of sin, concupiscence continually rebels against the soul : this we must never cease to resist, until we cease to live.

Prayer.

WHEN, O God, shall thy grace reign in our hearts, and subject them to the influence of thy love ? He who knows how to estimate the value and excellence of thy grace, O Lord, which is a participation of thy divine nature, and a holy infusion of thy goodness into our souls, will suffer the loss of all things else, rather than be deprived of such

treasure, and will not hesitate to make any sacrifice however great, to preserve it.

When I consider, O Lord, that those graces which I reject, or neglect, have been purchased for me at the price of thy sufferings and precious blood, how am I covered with confusion, for having made so bad a use of them, and for having preferred even trifles before them! Well may the account I must one day give of all the inspirations which I have neglected, as if so many drops of thy sacred blood dissipated or profaned, fill me with alarm and terror, and induce me henceforth to correspond with them most faithfully, that I may not forfeit my salvation. Amen.

Chapter Fifty-sixth.

That we ought to deny ourselves, and imitate Christ by the Cross.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, as much as thou canst go out of thyself, so much wilt thou be able to enter into me.

As the desiring nothing abroad brings peace at home, so the relinquishing thyself joins thee interiorly to God.

I will have thee learn the perfect renunciation of thyself according to my will, without contradiction or complaint.

Follow me: *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.* John xiv. Without *the Way*, there is no going; without *the Truth*, there is no knowing; without *the Life*, there is no living.

I am the *Way* which thou must follow; *the Truth* which thou must believe; *the Life* which thou must hope for.

I am *the Way* inviolable, *the Truth* infallible, and *the Life* that has no end.

I am the straightest *Way*, the sovereign *Truth*, the true *Life*, the blessed *Life*, an uncreated *Life*.

If thou abide in my *Way* thou shalt know the *Truth*, and the *Truth* shall deliver thee, and thou shalt attain to life everlasting.

II. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* Luke ix.

If thou wilt know the *Truth*, believe me; *if thou wilt be perfect, sell all:*

If thou wilt be my disciple, deny thyself:

If thou wilt possess a blessed life, despise this present *Life*:

If thou wilt be exalted in heaven, humble thyself in this world:

If thou wilt reign with me, bear the cross with me:

For none but the servants of the cross find the way of bliss and of true light.

[*Disciple.*] III. Lord Jesus, forasmuch as thy way is narrow, and despised by the world, grant that I may follow thee, and be despised by the world:

For the servant is not greater than his Lord, neither is the disciple above his Master. Matt. vi.

Let thy servant meditate on thy life, for there is my salvation and true holiness.

Whatever I read or hear besides, does not recreate nor fully delight me.

[*Christ.*] IV. Son, now thou knowest these things, and hast read them all, happy shalt thou be if thou fulfil them.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and I will love him, and I will manifest myself unto him, (John xiv.) and I will make him sit with me in the kingdom of my Father. Apoc. iii.

[*Disciple.*] V. Lord Jesus, as thou hast said and hast promised, so may it be indeed; and may it be my lot to merit it.

I have received the cross, I have received it from thy hand: and I will bear it until death, as thou hast laid it upon me. Indeed the life of a good religious man is a cross, but it is a cross that conducts him to paradise.

We have now begun, it is not lawful to go back, nor may we leave off.

VI. Take courage, my brethren, let us go forward together, Jesus will be with us.

For the sake of Jesus we took up his cross; for the sake of Jesus let us persevere in it :

He will be our Helper, who is our Captain and our Leader.

Behold our King marches before us, who will fight for us.

Let us follow him like men of courage; let no one shrink through fear; let us be ready valiantly to die in battle, and not suffer our glory to be tarnished by flying from the standard of the cross.

Practical Reflections.

If any man will come after me, says our Divine Redeemer, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross daily, and follow me. In this is included the whole practice of a christian life, and the way marked out by which we may securely go to eternal salvation, for Jesus is the way, the truth and the life; the way we must follow, the truth we must believe, and the life we must hope for. To live as christians, and to secure salvation, we must begin by renouncing and dying to ourselves; for this renunciation—this spirit of self-denial, is the first principle of the gospel, the fundamental law of christianity, our most essential duty, and the most effectual means of obtaining salvation. It is this interior mortification, this circumcision of the heart, this retrenchment of all criminal, dangerous, or useless indulgences, which constitutes the difference between the elect and the reprobate. The character of our present sinful state, should

be that of penance, which is the end of christianity and the assurance of salvation.

To carry our cross with Jesus Christ, is to suffer from all, while we are careful not to become the cause of suffering in others; it is to receive all pains of body and mind as coming from above; it is to endure with patience all the evils which happen to us from the justice of God, or the injustice of man; it is to accept of contempt as our due, and to consider it our greatest misfortune to suffer nothing for God, but our sovereign happiness, to suffer always for his love.

Prayer.

O DIVINE Saviour, how few are willing to be with thee on Calvary, yet how gladly would all accompany thee on Thabor and in heaven. While each one desires and seeks exemption from the cross, to live in tranquillity and ease, no one chuses to suffer for thee; although the only sure proof we can give thee of our love, is to be willing to suffer with thee, and to copy thy painful example.

O cross of Jesus! with how little respect do we carry thy relics about our persons; and how impatiently do we bear thy sorrows in our hearts! How shall I be able to behold thee with confidence at the last day; if now I look upon thee with horror? How shall I be able to give up my soul in

the embraces of the crucifix, if I now live an enemy to that emblem of mercy. Permit it not, O Jesus; and since thou hast saved me by the cross, grant that I may be ever willing to live in its practice, that I may die in its salvation. Amen.

Chapter Fifty-seventh.

That a man should not be too much dejected when he falls into some defects.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, patience and humility in adversity are more pleasing to me, than much consolation and devotion in prosperity. Why art thou disturbed at a little thing said against thee? If it had been more, thou oughtest not to have been moved.

But now let it pass, it is not the first or any thing new, nor will it be the last, if thou live long.

Thou art valiant enough, so long as no adversity or opposition comes in thy way.

Thou canst also give good advice, and encourage others with thy words; but when any unexpected trouble comes to knock at thy door, then thy counsel and thy courage fail thee.

Consider the great frailty, which thou often experiencest in small difficulties: yet it

is intended for thy good, as often as these or such like things befall thee.

II. Put it from thy heart the best thou canst: and if it has touched thee, yet let it not cast thee down, nor keep thee a long time entangled,

At least bear it patiently, if thou canst not receive it with joy.

And though thou be not willing to bear it, and perceivest an indignation arising within thyself, yet repress thyself, and suffer no inordinate word to come out of thy mouth which may scandalize the weak.

This commotion, which is stirred up in thee, will quickly be allayed, and thy inward pain will be sweetened by the return of grace.

I am still living, saith the Lord, ready to help thee, and comfort thee more than before, if thou put thy trust in me, and devoutly call upon me.

III. Keep thy mind calm and even, and prepare thyself for bearing still more.

All is not lost, if thou feel thyself often afflicted or grievously tempted.

Thou art man, and not God; thou art flesh, and not an angel.

How canst thou think to continue ever in the same state of virtue, when this was not found in the angels in heaven, nor in the first man in paradise?

I am he that raises up, and saves them

that mourn; and them that know their own infirmity I advance to my divinity.

[*Disciple.*] IV. O Lord, blessed be this thy word, it is more sweet to my mouth than honey, and the honey-comb.

What should I do in my so great tribulations and anguishes, if thou didst not encourage me with thy holy words?

What matter is it how much or what I suffer, so I come at length to the haven of salvation?

Grant me a good end, grant me a happy passage out of this world: be ever mindful of me, O my God, and direct me by the strait road to thy kingdom. Amen.

Practical Reflections.

WHEN languishing under great and long continued sufferings, let us remember that humble submission to the cross is incomparably more pleasing to God, than the enjoyment of consolation; and hence that the greatest consolation of the soul should be to be deprived of every other consolation but that of being ever faithful to its crucified Redeemer.

When tempted and inclined to sin, let us turn away from our evil inclinations, and resist them with all the strength and courage possible; let us have recourse to our Lord for his assistance, and to the Blessed Virgin,

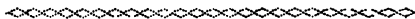
for her prayers. The sense of evil must not deject or discourage us, but elevate us to God. In him let us place all our confidence, and with an extreme horror for sin, withdraw our minds, as far as we are able, from the sinful objects which affect them and our hearts from the criminal pleasures which allure them. That we may remain faithful under contradictions, let us endeavour, when the heart is moved, to keep silence, and to sacrifice to God all those ill-natured reflections and excited feelings which proceed from resentment against those who have been the cause of our uneasiness; knowing that whatever we think or desire, or say against our neighbour, we think, desire, and say against Jesus Christ.

Let us remember in our interior afflictions that all is not lost because we are in trouble and temptation. Let us resist temptation, submit to humiliation, and believe that before we can be elevated to a union with God, we must first search the depth of our own miseries.

Prayer.

PERMIT not, O Lord, my afflictions to become unavailable to salvation; and if I do not suffer them with joy, grant at least I may endure them with patience. It is good for me to be humbled, that I may learn to

keep thy holy ordinances. Doubly wretched should I be, to make the miseries of this life serve only to consign me to eternal torments and despair! May then the sufferings which thou sendest me, O God, become the pledges of my salvation. Amen.



Chapter Fifty-eighth.

Of not searching into high matters; nor into the secret judgments of God.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, see thou dispute not of high matters, nor of the hidden judgments of God; why this man is left thus, and this other is raised to so great a grace; or why this person is so much afflicted, and that other so highly exalted.

These things are above the reach of man: neither can any reason or discourse be able to penetrate into the judgments of God.

When therefore the enemy suggests to thee such things as these, or thou hearest curious men inquiring into them, answer that of the prophet, *Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right.* Ps. cxviii.

And again: *The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves.* Ps. cxviii.

My judgments are to be feared, not to be searched into; for they are incomprehensible to human understanding.

II. In like manner do not inquire nor dispute, concerning the merits of the saints, which of them is more holy than the other, or which greater in the kingdom of heaven.

These things oftentimes breed strifes and unprofitable contentions, and nourish pride and vain glory: from whence arise envy and dissensions, whilst this man proudly seeks to prefer this saint, and another man is for preferring another.

Now to desire, to know and to search into such things as these, is of no profit, but rather displeaseth the saints; for *I am not the God of dissension, but of peace*, (1 Cor. xiv.) which peace consists more in true humility, than in exalting one's self.

III. Some are carried by a zeal of love towards these, or those, with greater affection, but this affection is rather human than divine.

I am he who made all the saints: I gave them grace, I have brought them to glory.

I know the merits of each of them; I prevented them by the blessings of my sweetness.

I foreknew my beloved ones before the creation:

I chose them out of the world; they were not beforehand with me to chuse me:

I called them by my grace, and drew them by my mercy.

I led them safe through many temptations,

I imparted to them extraordinary comforts, I gave them perseverance, I have crowned their patience.

IV. I know the first and the last: I embrace them all with an inestimable love.

I am to be praised in all my saints, I am to be blessed above all things, and to be honoured in every one of them whom I have thus gloriously magnified and eternally chosen, without any foregoing merits of their own.

He therefore that despises one of the least of my saints, honours not the greatest, for both little and great I have made:

And he that derogates from any one of the saints, derogates also from me, and from all the rest of them in the kingdom of heaven.

They are all one through the bond of love; they have the same sentiments, the same will, and all mutually love one another.

V. And yet, which is much higher, they all love me more than themselves and their own merits.

For being elevated above themselves, and drawn out of the love of themselves, they are wholly absorbed in the love of me, in whom also they rest by an eternal enjoyment.

Nor is there any thing which can divert them from me, or depress them: for being full of the eternal Truth, they burn with the fire of a charity that cannot be extinguished.

Therefore let carnal and sensual men, who know not how to love any thing but their private satisfaction forbear to dispute of the state of the saints. They add and take away according to their own inclination, not according to what is pleasing to the everlasting Truth.

VI. In many there is ignorance, especially in such as being but little enlightened, seldom know how to love any one with a perfect spiritual love.

They are as yet much inclined to such or such by a natural affection and human friendship; and as they are affected with regard to things below, they conceive the like imaginations of the things of heaven.

But there is an incomparable distance between what the imperfect imagine, and what enlightened men contemplate by revelation from above.

VII. Take heed therefore, my son, that thou treat not curiously of these things which exceed thy knowledge, but rather make it thy business and thy aim, that thou mayest be found amongst the number of those who inherit the kingdom of God, although thou shouldst be the least amongst them.

And if any one should know who were more holy or greater in the kingdom of heaven, what would this knowledge profit him, unless he would take occasion from knowing this to humble himself in my sight, and to praise my name with greater fervour?

It is much more acceptable to God for a man to think of the greatness of his own sins, and how little he is advanced in virtue, and at how great a distance he is from the perfection of the saints, than to dispute which of them is greater or less.

It is better to invoke the saints with devout prayers and tears, and to implore their glorious suffrages with an humble mind, than by a vain inquiry to search into their secrets.

VIII. They are well and perfectly contented, if men would but be contented, and refrain from their vain discourses.

They glory not in their own merits, for they ascribe nothing of goodness to themselves, but all to me, because I bestowed all upon them out of my infinite charity.

They are filled with so great a love of the Deity, and such overflowing joy, that there is nothing wanting to their glory, nor can any happiness be wanting to them.

All the saints, by how much they are the higher in glory, by so much are they the more humble in themselves, and nearer to me, and better beloved by me.

And therefore thou hast it written, that *they cast down their crowns before God, and fell upon their faces before the Lamb, and adored him that lives for ever and ever.*
Apoc. iv.

IX. Many examine who is greatest in the kingdom of God, who know not whether

they shall be worthy to be numbered among the least.

It is a great matter to be even the least in heaven, where all are great; because all shall be called, and shall be, the children of God.

The least shall be as a thousand, and the sinner of a hundred years shall die.

For when the disciples asked, *Who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?* (Matt. xviii.) they received this answer:

Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little one, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

X. Woe to them that disdain to humble themselves willingly with the little children; for the low gate of the heavenly kingdom will not suffer them to enter thither.

Woe also to the rich who have their comforts here; for when the poor shall go into the kingdom of God, they shall stand lamenting without.

Rejoice, you that are humble, and be glad you that are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God; yet so, if you walk in Truth.

Practical Reflections.

If we would honour the saints as they deserve, we should invoke and imitate them, rather than dispute about their degrees of heavenly glory. We should endeavour to copy their bright example; for this is really to honour the saints, to become saints like themselves.

God has formed all the saints upon the model of his son, the word incarnate; so that, we cannot become the objects of God's love, if we make not Jesus Christ the object of our imitation. He has willed, says St. Cyprian, that there should be saints in all states and conditions of life, to make known to all men, that each one in his own state may sanctify his soul, and obtain salvation, by living a holy and a christian life. He has constituted saints for our protectors and our models, that we gain heaven by walking in their footsteps: they hear our prayers, and being secure of their own happiness, are solicitous only for ours.

Let us then endeavour to live and to suffer with them here, that we may live and reign with them hereafter; and let us remember that, according to the gospel, there is but one way of arriving at the happy term which they have reached, which is the way of penance, mortification and disengagement

from the world; every other way leads to perdition.

Prayer.

THOU desirest, O Lord, our sanctification and salvation, and thou givest us the most efficacious means of attaining them, but we have hitherto miserably neglected them; grant that henceforth we may really honour the saints by forming ourselves upon their example, and render ourselves worthy of the eternal happiness which they possess by copying their endeavours to obtain it. Suffer us not to be idle admirers of their felicity, but doers of those good deeds by which they obtained it, that thus we may be assured that ours also shall be the kingdom of heaven. Amen.



Chapter Fifty-ninth.

That all hope and confidence is to be fixed in God alone.

[*Disciple.*] I. LORD, what is my confidence which I have in this life? Or what is my greatest comfort amongst all things that appear under heaven?

Is it not thou, my Lord God, whose mercies are without number?

Where was I ever well without thee, or when could things go ill with me when thou wast present?

I had rather be poor for thee, than rich without thee.

I choose rather to sojourn upon earth with thee, than to possess heaven without thee. Where thou art, there is heaven; and there is death and hell, where thou art not.

After thee I have a longing desire, and therefore must needs sigh after thee, and cry, and pray.

In fine, I cannot fully trust in any one to bring me seasonable help in my necessities, save only in thee, my God.

Thou art my Hope, thou art my Confidence, thou art my Comforter, and most faithful above all.

II. All seek their own interest; thou aimest only at my salvation and profit, and turnest all things to my good.

And although thou expose me to various temptations and adversities, yet all this thou ordainest for my good, who art wont to prove thy beloved servants a thousand ways.

Under which proofs thou oughtest no less to be loved and praised, than if thou wert to fill me with heavenly comforts.

III. In thee therefore O Lord God, I put all my hope and refuge: to thee I make

known all my tribulation and anguish; for I find all to be infirm and unstable whatever I behold out of thee.

For neither will a multitude of friends be of any service to me; nor can strong auxiliaries bring me any succour, nor wise counsellors give me a profitable answer, nor the books of the learned comfort me, nor any wealth deliver me, nor any secret and pleasant place secure me, if thou thyself do not assist, help, strengthen, comfort, instruct, and defend me.

IV. For all things which seem to be for our peace and for our happiness, when thou art absent, are nothing; and in truth contribute nothing to our felicity.

Thou therefore art the fountain of all good, the height of life, and the depth of wisdom; and to trust in thee above all things is the greatest comfort of thy servants.

To thee I lift up mine eyes; in thee, O my God, the Father of Mercies, I put my trust. Bless and sanctify my soul with thy heavenly blessing that it may be made thy holy habitation, and the seat of thy eternal glory; and let nothing be found in the temple of thy dignity that may offend the eyes of thy majesty.

According to the greatness of thy goodness, and the multitude of thy tender mercies, look down upon me, and give ear to the prayer of thy poor servant, who is in

banishment afar off from thee in the region of the shade of death.

Protect and defend the soul of thy poor servant, amidst so many dangers of this corruptible life, and direct him in the company of thy grace, through the way of peace, to the country of everlasting light. *Amen.*

Practical Reflections.

WHEN afflicted and loaded with interior troubles, or exterior trials and contradictions, or with all these at the same time, let us confidently have recourse to God, who alone can aid and assist us, and let us say to him, Lord thou knowest the designs of our enemies against our souls, how shall we be able to escape them, if thou assist us not? We raise up our eyes and our hearts towards thee, who alone art able to protect us; thou art our God engaged to help us; thou art our Redeemer, and wilt deliver us; thou art our Father, and with thy assistance we shall not yield nor be in danger of perishing.

Prayer.

THOU hast said, O Lord, that to become thy disciples we must deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow thee. Thou knowest our extreme repugnance, to both one and the other. Suffer not our faith on

his point to condemn us for not practising
that we believe to be necessary for salva-
tion, but grant that as we believe, so we
may ever live, as becometh Christians. Amen.

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

N

THE
FOLLOWING OF CHRIST.

BOOK IV.

OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

The voice of Christ.

COME to me all you that labour, and are heavy burthened, and I will refresh you, saith the Lord. St. Matt. xi.

The bread which I shall give, is my flesh, for the life of the world. St. John vi.

Take and eat, This is my body, which shall be delivered for you: do this in remembrance of me. I Cor. xi.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. St. John vi.

The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life. St. John vi.



Chapter First.

With how great reverence Christ is to be received.

[*Disciple.*] I. THESE are thy words, O Christ, the eternal Truth, though not all delivered at one time, nor written in one place.

Since therefore they are thy words, and they are true, they are all to be received by me with thanks, and with faith.

They are thine, and thou hast spoken them; and they are also mine, because thou hast delivered them for my salvation.

I will willingly receive them from thy mouth, that they may be more inseparably ingrafted in my heart.

These words, of so great tenderness, full of sweetness and love, encourage me; but my sins terrify me, and my unclean conscience keeps me back from approaching to so great mysteries.

The sweetness of thy words invite me, but the multitude of my offences weighs me down.

II. Thou commandest me to approach to thee with confidence, if I would have part with thee; and to receive the food of immortality, if I desire to obtain life and glory everlasting.

Come, thou sayest to me, all you that labour, and are heavy burthened, and I will refresh you. Matt xi.

O sweet and amiable word in the ear of a sinner, that thou, O Lord, my God, shouldst invite the poor and needy to the communion of thy most sacred body ;

But who am I, O Lord, that I should presume to come to thee ?

Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee ; and thou sayest, *Come you all to me.*

III. What means this most loving condescension, and so friendly an invitation ?

How shall I dare to approach, who am conscious to myself of no good on which I can presume ?

How shall I introduce thee into my house, who have oftentimes provoked thy indignation ?

The angels and the archangels stand with a reverential awe ; the saints and the just are afraid ; and thou sayest, *Come you all to me.*

Unless thou, O Lord, didst say it, who could believe it to be true ?

And unless thou didst command it, who would dare attempt to approach ?

IV. Behold Noah, a just man, laboured a hundred years in building the ark, that he with a few might be preserved ; and how shall I be able in the space of one hour to

prepare myself to receive with reverence the Maker of the world?

Moses thy servant, thy great and special friend, made an ark of incorruptible wood, which he also covered with the most pure gold, that he might deposit therein the tables of the law; and shall I a rotten creature, presume so easily to receive thee the Maker of the law, and the Giver of life?

Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel, employed seven years in building a magnificent temple for the praise of thy name;

And for eight days together celebrated the feast of the dedication thereof; he offered a thousand pacific victims, and brought the ark of the covenant in a solemn manner into the place prepared for it, with sound of trumpet and jubilee:

And I, a wretch and the vilest of men, how shall I bring thee into my house, who can hardly spend one half hour devoutly? And would to God I had ever once spent one half hour as I ought!

V. O my God, how much did they endeavour to do to please thee? Alas, how little it is that I do! How short a time do I spend, when I prepare myself to communicate?

Seldom am I wholly recollected, very seldom free from all distraction!

And yet surely, in the life-giving presence of thy Deity, no unbecoming thought should

occur, nor any thing created take up my mind; for it is not an angel, but the Lord of angels that I am to entertain.

VI. And yet there is a very great difference between the ark of the covenant with its relics, and thy most pure body, with its unspeakable virtues: between those sacrifices of the law, which were figures of things to come, and the true sacrifice of thy body, which is the accomplishing of all those ancient sacrifices.

VII. Why then am I not more inflamed, considering thy venerable presence?

Why do I not prepare myself with greater care to receive thy sacred gifts, seeing that these ancient holy patriarchs and prophets, yea kings also and princes, with the whole people, have shewn so great affection of devotion towards the divine worship?

VIII. The most devout king David danced before the ark of God with all his might, commemorating the benefits bestowed in times past on the fathers. He made musical instruments of sundry kinds; he published psalms, and appointed them to be sung with joy; he himself likewise often sung them, playing upon his harp, inspired with the grace of the Holy Ghost. He taught the people of Israel to praise God with their whole heart, and to join their voices in blessing and magnifying him every day.

If so great devotion was then used, and such remembrance of the praise of God before the ark of the covenant: how great ought to be the reverence and devotion which I and all christian people should have in the presence of this sacrament, in the receiving the most excellent body of Christ?

IX. Many run to sundry places to visit the relics of the saints, and are astonished to hear their wonderful works; they behold the noble buildings of their churches, and kiss their sacred bones, wrapt up in silk and gold:

And behold I have thee here present on the altar, my God, the Saint of saints, the Creator of men, and the Lord of angels.

Oftentimes in seeing those things men are moved with curiosity, and the novelty of the sight, and but little fruit of amendment is reaped thereby; especially when persons lightly run hither and thither, without true contrition for their sins.

But here, in the sacrament of the altar, thou art wholly present, my God, the man Christ Jesus; where also the fruit of eternal salvation is plentifully reaped, as often as thou art worthily and devoutly received.

And to this we are not drawn by any levity, curiosity, or sensuality; but by a firm faith, a devout hope, and sincere charity.

X. O God, the invisible maker of the world, how wonderfully dost thou deal with

THE HISTORY OF THE
THE HISTORY OF THE

THE HISTORY OF THE
THE HISTORY OF THE

THE HISTORY OF THE
THE HISTORY OF THE

THE HISTORY OF THE
THE HISTORY OF THE

THE HISTORY OF THE
THE HISTORY OF THE

THE HISTORY OF THE
THE HISTORY OF THE

THE HISTORY OF THE
THE HISTORY OF THE

THE HISTORY OF THE
THE HISTORY OF THE



It is therefore much to be lamented, that many take so little notice of this saving mystery, which rejoices heaven, and preserves the whole world.

O! the blindness and hardness of the heart of man, that doth not consider so unspeakable a gift; and from a daily use of it, falls into a disregard for it.

XIII. For if this most holy sacrament were only celebrated in one place, and consecrated only by one priest in the world, how great a desire would men have to go to that place, and to such a priest of God; that they might see the divine mysteries celebrated?

But now there are made many priests, and Christ is offered up in many places; that the grace and love of God to man may appear so much the greater, by how much more this sacred communion is spread throughout the world.

Thanks be to thee, O good Jesus, our eternal Shepherd, who hast vouchsafed to feed us poor exiles with thy precious body and blood, and to invite us to the receiving these mysteries with the words of thy own mouth, saying, *Come to me all you that labour, and are burthened, and I will refresh you.* Matt. xi.

Practical Reflections.

Who can conceive or explain the excellence of the all-divine gift which Jesus Christ bestows upon us in giving us his blessed body and blood in the Holy Uucharist, in which we receive God with all his perfections, the plentitude of his divinity, all the virtues and graces of his humanity, and all the merits of a man-God? We may say with St. Augustin, that God, though all powerful, can bestow upon us nothing greater than himself, whom he here gives us; though most rich and liberal, can yet dispense to us nothing more from the treasures of his bounty, than this one gift of his body and blood, his whole self; and though the uncreated and incarnate wisdom of the Father, yet cannot invent a more efficacious means of gaining our hearts than to enter into them by the holy communion, and thus unite and transform us into himself.

But what should delight our minds and our hearts, is, that in the sacred host which we receive and even in its smallest part, (that we may lose nothing of so precious, a gift,) he has included all the riches of his bounty, wisdom and love, to communicate them all to us, and by communicating them to us, to enable us to live a supernatural and divine life by feeding and nourishing us with

God; for it is to this end that he assumes a new life upon our altars, to impart it to us in the holy communion, by which, says the council of Trent, he infuses into our souls all the riches of his love. Yes, my Saviour, after having bestowed upon us all the goods of nature and of grace, thou addedst still more to thy gifts, thy whole self in the blessed Eucharist. After having been liberal of thy gifts in our regard, which although most precious, are still much less than thee, in this adorable sacrament thou art prodigal even of thy very self. Who then can refuse and withhold his heart from God, who comes thus to take possession of it, though it already belongs to him alone, upon numberless other titles?

Prayer.

WHAT return can I make thee, O Lord, for all thy gifts and favours? What can I give thee in exchange for thyself, whom thou bestowest upon my soul, to become to me the principle of a truly christian life, and the pledge of my salvation? As often as I have the sacred honour of receiving thee, my most amiable Saviour, I may say that thou art all mine, and yet, alas! after having received thee so frequently, I cannot as yet say, that I am all thine. Come, O Jesus, and take full possession of my ungrateful and unfaith-

ful heart, which is so little devoted to thee, and so much given to the world, and to itself. Conquer its perversity, O Lord, and oblige it to love thee, that it may hate itself, and submit entirely to thee whenever it becomes reprehensible in thy sight. It is thine, O God, as the work of thy hands and the price of thy blood; it is thy purchased inheritance, which thou comest to take possession of. Permit it not to depart from thee to become the slave of its passions, but being come to me establish thy reign entirely and for ever over me.

Suffer me not, O Jesus, when I receive thee who art all mine and for ever, to be so unhappy, like many christians, as to be thine only in appearance and exteriorly, only in desire and volition, or to be but half thine, wishing to reconcile God and the world, vanity and devotion; which thou declarest in the gospel, is impossible and incompatible with salvation. Suffer me not to be so miserable as to belong to thee only for a time, by almost immediately after communion, falling again into voluntary habitual faults, which thy presence should correct, or at least diminish, for the fruit of a good communion is strength, courage, and constancy to resist and conquer ourselves in all these things.

Receive, O Jesus, my most humble thanks for thy institution of this adorable sacrament, in which thy love triumphs over al

thy other attributes, to feed and nourish me with thy own body and blood. In gratitude for so great a favour, for so wonderful and divine a benefit, I beseech thee to accept of the sincere, perfect, and irrevocable offering which I now make of my whole self to thee, for time and eternity. Amen.

Chapter Second.

That the great goodness and charity of God is shewed to man in this sacrament.

[*Disciple.*] I. O LORD, trusting in thy goodness and in thy great mercy, I come sick to my Saviour, hungry and thirsty to the Fountain of Life, needy to the King of heaven, a servant to his Lord, a creature to his Creator, and one in desolation to his lovely Comforter.

But whence is this to me, that thou shouldst come to me? Who am I, that thou shouldst give thyself to me?

How dares such a sinner appear before thee? And how dost thou vouchsafe to come to a sinner?

Thou knowest thy servant, and thou knowest that he has nothing of good in him that can entitle him to this favour.

I confess therefore my unworthiness, I

acknowledge thy bounty, I praise thy goodness, and I give thee thanks for thy extensive charity.

For it is of thy own mercy thou dost not for my merits, that thy goodness be better known to me; that greater charity may be imparted, and humility perfectly recommended.

Since therefore this is what pleaseth thee and thou hast commanded it should be done, thy merciful condescension pleaseth me, and I wish that my iniquity may be no obstacle.

II. O! most sweet and most bountiful Jesus, how great reverence and thanks, and perpetual praise, are due to thee, for receiving of thy sacred body, whose dignity no man can sufficiently express?

But what shall I think on in this communion, when I am approaching to my Lord, whom I can never reverence as much as I ought, and yet would gladly receive with devotion?

What can I think on better or more wholesome to my soul, than to humble myself entirely in thy presence, and extol thy infinite goodness above me?

I praise thee, O my God, and I extol thee for ever: I despise myself, and subject myself to thee, casting myself down to the depth of my unworthiness.

III. Behold, thou art the Saint of saints, and I am the greatest of sinners.

Behold thou bowest thyself down to me, who am not worthy to look up to thee.

Behold, thou comest to me; thou art willing to be with me.

Thou invitest me to thy banquet, where thou wilt give me thy heavenly food, and the bread of angels to eat: no other verily, than thyself, the living Bread, who didst come down from heaven, and who givest life to the world

IV. Behold, whence love proceeds, what a bounty shines forth! How great thanks and praises are due to thee for these things!

O! how wholesome and profitable was thy device in this institution! How sweet and delightful this banquet, in which thou givest thyself to be our food!

O! how admirable is thy work, O Lord! how powerful thy virtue! how infallible thy truth!

For thou hast spoken the word, and all things were made; and that has been done which thou hast commanded.

V. A wonderful thing it is, and worthy of faith, and exceeding all human understanding; that *thou, O Lord my God, true God, and true Man, art contained whole and entire under a small form of bread and wine, and without being consumed, art eaten by the receiver.*

Thou the Lord of all things, who standest in need of no one, hast been pleased by this sacrament to dwell in us:

Preserve my heart and my body without stain, that with a joyful and clean conscience I may be able often to celebrate thy sacred mysteries, and to receive for my eternal salvation, what thou hast principally ordained and instituted for thy honour and perpetual remembrance.

VI. Rejoice, O my soul, and give thanks to thy God for so noble a gift, and so singular a comfort left to thee in this vale of tears.

For as often as thou repeatest this mystery, and receivest the body of Christ, so often dost thou celebrate the work of thy redemption, and art made partaker of all the merits of Christ.

For the charity of Christ is never diminished, and the greatness of his propitiation is never exhausted.

Therefore oughtest thou to dispose thyself for this by perpetually renewing the vigour of thy mind, and to weigh with attentive consideration this great mystery of thy salvation.

And as often as thou sayest or hearest mass, it ought to seem to thee as great, new, and delightful, as if Christ that same day first descended into the Virgin's womb, had been made man; or hanging on the cross, was suffering and dying for the salvation of mankind.

Practical Reflections.

I. **WHEN** thou approachest the holy communion, consider the greatness and majesty of God, whom thou art going to receive, and the baseness and unworthiness of thyself a vile and sinful creature, who art about to receive him. Humble thyself in his presence, and say to him, who am I, Lord, that I should dare to approach thee? and who art thou, that thou shouldst debase thyself so low, as to come to me? When I consider on the one hand the excellence of thy sanctity and purity, and on the other, the corruption and disorders of my soul, I am forced to acknowledge that I am most unworthy to receive thee, and that I cannot without rashness, permit thee to enter into my heart. But, knowing the excess of thy goodness, and the need which I have of thee for my sanctification and salvation, I will approach to thee, my Saviour with a holy confidence, for thou hast said that those who are well, stand not in need of a physician, but only those who are sick; to thee, who comest to seek and to save those who are gone astray and are in danger of perishing; to thee who art the "word made flesh for love of man;" to thee whose desire is, that we be converted and live. I am indeed a grievous sinner, but I will no longer remain so. I feel neither

consolation nor delight in thy holy presence, but sensible of my many miseries, I come to lay them all at thy sacred feet ; here I will rest.

II. Whence comes this honour and this happiness, that my God should so far conceal his sovereign majesty as to become the food and nourishment of my soul ? Ah ! it is the profound humility of a Man-God, who would carry his abjection not only so far as not to appear as God, but not even as man, and eclipse all the splendours of his majesty by the excess of his bounty, and the charms of his love for us. O my Saviour, while thou concealest thy divine perfections from our sight, that we may not be dazzled by their glory ; thou dost disclose to us the depth of thy humility, that we may be induced to copy it in our conduct. O my soul ! canst thou desire to be known by others, when thou beholdest thy God concealed and hidden in the holy Eucharist ! How shall such a miserable worm of the earth as I am, dare to exalt itself, when I reflect that my God annihilates himself in this mystery, to impress upon me the character of his humility.

III. Say not, christian soul, that thou dost not dare to approach to a God so great and awful. Thou art indeed unworthy, and thou wilt not cease to be so, if thou dost not endeavour to attend diligently to thy cor-

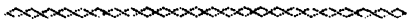
rection ; but, says St. Augustin, this bread of angels is not a poison ; it is a nourishment given for thy use, and necessary for thy salvation. Receive it therefore, and frequently nourish thy soul with it ; but let not habit deprive thee of all relish for this heavenly food, as it generally does for all worldly dainties. The holy dispositions in which thou shouldst receive the God of holiness, ought to increase with the frequency of thy approach to the holy table. It is not for thee to know this increase ; but there is always advancement when thou dost strive with greater earnestness to become more holy, by means of recollection and humility.

Præf.

Before communion.

I BELIEVE, O Lord, that thou art my God, and the sovereign judge, who will decide my eternal doom. With what respect therefore ought I to approach thee ! Alas, who am I, that I should dare even so much as to lift up my eyes towards thee ? How then shall I dare to receive thee into my heart, which is so miserable, so corrupt, and so unworthy of thee ! Supply, O Lord, my great unworthiness by the excess of thy merciful goodness, which does not suppose, but constitutes the merit of thy creatures.

O infinite greatness! O sovereign majesty, O immensity of my God, concealed and annihilated in the sacred host which I am going to receive! To thee do I give all glory, and to myself all possible contempt, which alone is my due. Come, O Jesus, come and fill my empty and depraved heart with the plentitude of thy love. Come, and unite thyself to my soul, and raise me, who am poor, from the dust and from nothing, and elevate me to the possession of thy love. But am I nothing, ? I am worse, I am a sinner and deserve hell. Ah! I would willingly say with St. Peter, *depart from me, O Lord*; but fearing, lest thou shouldst say to me, as thou didst say to him, that I shall have no part in thy glory, if I do not honour thy humility; I consent to thy being born in my soul, although a thousand times poorer than the crib, that I may live henceforth only by and for thee. Amen.



Chapter Third.

That it is profitable to communicate often.

[*Disciple.*] I. BEHOLD I come to thee O Lord, that it may be well with me by thy gift, and that I may be delighted in thy holy banquet, which thou, O God, in thy sweetness hast prepared for the poor.

Behold, in thee is all whatsoever I can or ought to desire: thou art my salvation and my redemption, my hope and my strength, my honour and my glory.

Make therefore the soul of thy servant joyful this day, because, O Lord Jesus, I have lifted up my soul to thee,

I desire at this time to receive thee devoutly and reverently: I would gladly bring thee into my house, that, like Zaccheus, I may receive thy blessing, and be numbered among the children of Abraham. Luke xix.

My soul longs to be nourished with thy body; my heart desires to be united with thee.

II. Give thyself to me, and it is enough; for without thee no comfort is available.

Without thee I cannot subsist; and without thy visitation I cannot live.

And therefore I must come often to thee, and receive thee for the remedy, and for the health and strength of my soul; lest perhaps I faint in the way, if I be deprived of this heavenly food.

For so, O most merciful Jesus, thou wert pleased once to say, when thou hadst been preaching to the people, and curing sundry diseases: *I will not send them home fasting, lest they faint in the way.* Matt. xv.

Deal now in like manner with me, who hast left thyself in the sacrament for the comfort of thy faithful.

For thou art the most sweet reflection of the soul: and he that shall eat thee worthily, shall be partaker and heir of everlasting glory.

It is indeed necessary for me, who am so often falling and committing sin, and so quickly grow slack and faint, by frequent prayers and confessions, and by the holy communion of thy body, to repair my strength, to cleanse and inflame my soul: lest perhaps by abstaining for a longer time I fall away from my holy purpose.

III. For the senses of man are prone to evil from his youth; and unless thy divine medicine succour him, man quickly falls to worse.

The holy communion therefore withdraws him from evil, and strengthens him in good.

For if I am so often negligent and lukewarm now when I communicate or celebrate, what would it be if I did not take this remedy, and should not seek so great a help?

And although I am not every day fit, nor well disposed to celebrate, yet I will endeavour at proper times to receive the divine Mysteries, and to make myself partaker of so great a grace.

For this is the principal comfort of a faithful soul, so long as she sojourns afar off from thee in this mortal body; being mindful often of her God, to receive her Beloved with a devout mind.

IV. O wonderful condescension of thy tender love towards us, that thou, O Lord God, the Creator and Enlivener of all spirits, shouldst vouchsafe to come to a poor soul, and, with thy whole divinity and humanity, satisfy her hunger!

O happy mind, and blessed soul, which deserves to receive thee her Lord God devoutly; and in receiving thee to be filled with spiritual joy!

O! how great a Lord does she entertain! how beloved a guest does she bring into her house! how sweet a companion does she receive! how faithful a friend does she accept of! how beautiful and how noble a Spouse does she embrace, who deserves to be loved above all, and beyond all that she can desire!

Let heaven and earth, with all their attire, be silent in thy presence, O my dearest Beloved; for whatever praise or beauty they have, is all the gift of thy bounty; nor can they come up to the beauty of thy name, of whose wisdom there is no end.

Practical Reflections.

That we ought ardently to desire to receive the holy communion, or at least be sensible of the need we have of it, and should frequently receive it.

WE have great reason, to be humbled and confounded before our Lord Jesus Christ, when we feel ourselves cold and indifferent,

in approaching to him, and are induced to receive him in the holy communion only through obedience, and not by the ardour of our desires. For how can we know thee, O Jesus, and not love thee, and how can we love thee and not desire to receive thee, and to be transformed into thee, by worthily and frequently receiving thee in the holy communion? And yet, O God, how often does insensibility towards thee, desolate my soul, and would discourage me, were I not assured that, although I am deficient of that love which I desire to have for thee alone, which I cannot acquire of myself, but which I ask of thee, thou wouldst still have me receive thee, through obedience and with humility. What, O God, would become of me, in the dryness, which I experience, were I not assured that the great miseries of my soul draw down thy mercies upon me, and that thy delight is to dwell in a heart which conscious of its own unworthiness, does all in its power to prepare itself for thee? In truth, the humble acknowledgment of our unworthiness, after a confession the most entire of which a christian is capable, supplies the place of ardent desires for the holy communion; and we cannot either honour or please God more than by debasing ourselves for his love before his sacred majesty. We should not therefore abstain from the holy communion, because we feel no devo-

tion nor any desire of approaching; but we should communicate as often as a wise and discreet director advises us, and receive Jesus Christ in obedience to him, at whose voice he himself descends upon the altar.

Is there anything more easy, or more consoling, than to reflect, when we are preparing ourselves in the best manner we are able for the holy communion, that Jesus Christ has said that those who are well, need not a physician, but only such as are sick.

Prayer.

For a good communion.

O Jesus! it is with full confidence in those words which thou speakest to me, and which I have just read, that I prepare myself to receive thee, not because I deserve such a favour, but because I have need of thee, and my soul cannot live without thee. It is afflicted with many maladies and infirmities, which thou alone, its sovereign and charitable physician, canst heal. Come then, my Saviour, and apply a remedy to my wounds, heal the pride of my heart with thy humility, and consume all self-love with the fire of thy divine charity. Come and invest me with thy strength, that I may conquer my passions; animate me with thy spirit that I may seek only to please thee, and live that supernatural and divine life, which is character-

istic of the life which thou livest, and which thou bringest to me in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist. Amen.



Chapter Fourth.

That many benefits are bestowed upon them who communicate devoutly.

[*Disciple.*] I. O LORD, my God, prevent thy servant in the blessings of thy sweetness, that I may approach worthily and devoutly to thy magnificent Sacrament.

Raise up my heart towards thee, and deliver me from this heavy sluggishness.

Visit me with thy grace, that I may taste in spirit thy sweetness, which plentifully lies hid in this sacrament, as in its fountain.

Illuminate also my eyes to behold so great a mystery, and strengthen me to believe it with an undoubted faith:

For it is thy work, not the power of man: thy sacred institution, not man's invention.

For no man can be found able of himself to know and understand these things, which surpass even the subtlety of angels.

What! shall I, therefore, an unworthy sinner, who am but dust and ashes, be able to search into or conceive of so high and sacred a mystery?

II. O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, with a good and firm faith, and in obedience to thy command, I come to thee with hope and reverence; *and I do verily believe that thou art here present in the Sacrament, God and man.*

It is then thy will that I should receive thee, and through love unite myself to thee.

Wherefore I implore thy mercy; and I beg of thee to give me for this a special grace, that I may be wholly melted away in thee, and overflow with thy love, and seek no more any comfort from any thing else.

For this most high and most excellent Sacrament is the health of soul and body, the remedy of all spiritual diseases, by which my vices are cured, my passions are restrained, temptations are overcome or lessened, a greater grace is infused, virtue receives an increase, faith is confirmed, hope strengthened, charity inflamed and extended.

III. For thou hast bestowed, and still oftentimes dost bestow, many good things in this Sacrament to thy beloved, who communicate devoutly, O my God, the Support of my Soul, who art the Repairer of human infirmity, and the Giver of all interior comfort.

For thou impartest unto them much consolation, to support them in their many troubles; and thou liftest them up from the depth of their own dejection, to the hope of

thy protection; and thou dost recreate and enlighten them interiorly with a certain new grace; in such sort, that they who before communion were anxious, and felt no affection in themselves, after being fed with this heavenly meat and drink, find themselves changed for the better.

And thou art pleased to deal thus with thy Elect, to the end that they may truly acknowledge and plainly experience how great is their infirmity, when left to themselves, and how much they receive from thy bounty and grace.

For of themselves, they are cold, dry, and indevout; but by thee, they are made fervent, cheerful and devout.

For who is he, that approaching humbly to the Fountain of Sweetness, does not carry away with him some little sweetness?

Or who, standing by a great fire, does not receive from it some little heat?

Now, thou art a Fountain always full and overflowing; thou art a fire always burning, and never decaying.

IV. Wherefore if I cannot draw out of the fullness of the Fountain, nor drink my fill, I will at least set my mouth to the orifice of this heavenly pipe, that so I may draw from thence some small drop to refresh my thirst, to the end that I may not be wholly dried up.

And if I cannot as yet be all heavenly,

and all on fire, like the cherubim and seraphim, I will however endeavour to apply myself to devotion, and to prepare my heart for the acquiring some small flame of divine fire, by the humbly receiving of this life-giving Sacrament.

And whatever is wanting to me, O good Jesus, most blessed Saviour, do thou in thy bounty and goodness supply for me, who hast vouchsafed to call all unto thee, saying, *Come to me, all you that labour, and are burthened, and I will refresh you.* Matt. xi.

V. I labour indeed with the sweat of my brow, I am tormented with grief of heart, I am *burthened* with sins, I am troubled with temptations, and am entangled and oppressed with many evil passions; and there is no one to help me, no one to deliver and save me, but thou, O Lord God, my Saviour, to whom I commit myself and all that is mine, that thou mayest keep me, and bring me to everlasting life.

Receive me for the praise and glory of thy name, who hast prepared thy body and blood for my meat and drink.

Grant, O Lord God, my Saviour, that with the frequenting this thy mystery, the affection of my devotion may increase.

Practical Reflections.

Ask of Jesus Christ a lively faith in his real presence, and an ardent love for him, in the most holy sacrament of the altar.

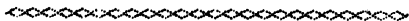
I believe, O Lord, that thou art present, both body and soul, in the adorable sacrament, which I am about to receive. Thou wilt there make me partaker of the merits of thy blessed humanity, and wilt inebriate me with the plentitude of thy divinity. Change then, O Lord, change the indifference of my heart into an ardent desire of loving thee, of pleasing and possessing thee. Permit me not to regard or to receive thee with coldness, who comest to inflame my heart with the fire of thy love. Supply in me whatever is wanting of faith in a mystery so incomprehensible to all human understanding; enliven me with a lively sense of thy presence, and grant that my heart may receive thee as its God with reverence, as its Saviour with confidence, and as its Father with love.

Is it possible, my soul, that surrounded and replenished with all the ardour of God's love for thee, thou shouldst still remain all ice in the midst of so much fire! Alas, O Jesus! how miserable am I to feel so much eagerness to please myself, and so much indifference about pleasing thee! Lord if thou

wilt thou canst heal me; say to me then as thou didst say to the leper who addressed this prayer to thee: *I will*,—be thou healed of thy tepidity and insensibility.

Prayer.

To thee, do I address myself, O my most amiable Saviour, that I may obtain fervour and fidelity in thy love. Thou knowest that full of myself and of self-love, I am most unworthy and incapable of thy love; but I beseech thee, the God of my heart, to inspire me to copy thy virtues, to follow thy inclinations and to rely on thy merits: instil into my soul thy meekness, humility, and patience, that so I may be animated with thy spirit, and live by thee. Amen.



Chapter Fifth.

Of the dignity of the Sacrament, and of the priestly state.

[*Christ.*] I. IF thou hadst the purity of an angel, and the sanctity of St. John the Baptist, thou wouldst not be worthy to receive or handle this Sacrament.

For this is not due to any merits of men, that a man should consecrate and handle the Sacrament of Christ, and receive for his food, the bread of angels.

THOUGH HE WAS ABUSED BY THE
 VULGAR MINDS OF HIS OWN
 TIME, HE WAS NOT AT ALL
 ATTACHED TO THE VANITIOUS
 PLEASURES OF THIS WORLD, AND
 THESE THINGS DID NOT BRING HIM
 IN DEATH. HE IS NOT TO BE
 DESPISED, ALL EARLY
 THAT WE MUST DIE AND
 IS.

Why then, some may say,
 which passeth away, and
 sight, and is not to be
 hearts, and is not to be
 alone, and is not to be
 should we be so much
 we possess of it, and
 IN TRUST, AND IS NOT
 IS NOT TO BE
 ALLY TO THE WORLD.

~~Section~~

GREAT IS THE
 ALL EARLY, AND IS
 WHAT ARE THE
 IN EXCESSIVE
 WORLD FOR THE
 GOD, TO LIVE ON
 EVER, AND IS
 OF A CHRISTIAN
 AND ~~WORTHY~~

Great is this mystery, and great the dignity of priests, to whom that is given which is not granted to angels.

For priests alone, rightly ordained in the Church, have power to celebrate and to consecrate the body of Christ.

The priest indeed is the minister of God, using the word of God, and by the command and institution of God: but God himself is there the principal Author, and invisible Worker, to whom is subject all that he wills, and to whose command everything is obedient.

II. Thou must therefore give more heed to an omnipotent God, in everything relating to this most excellent Sacrament, than to thy own sense, or any visible sign: and therefore thou art to approach to this work with fear and reverence.

Take heed to thyself, and see what kind of ministry has been delivered to thee, by the imposition of the bishop's hands.

Lo! thou art made a priest, and art consecrated to say Mass: see now that in due time thou faithfully and devoutly offer up sacrifice to God, and that thou behave thyself in such manner as to be without reproof.

Thou hast not lightened thy burthen, but art now bound with a stricter band of discipline, and art obliged to a greater perfection of sanctity.

A priest ought to be adorned with all vir-

tues, and to give example of a good life to others.

His conversation should not be with the vulgar and common ways of men, but with the angels in heaven, or with perfect men upon earth.

III. A priest clad in his sacred vestments, is Christ's vicegerent, to pray to God for himself, and for all the people, in a suppliant and humble manner.

He has before him and behind him the sign of the cross of the Lord, that he may always remember the passion of Christ.

He bears the cross before him in his vestment, that he may diligently behold the footsteps of Christ, and fervently endeavour to follow them.

He is marked with a cross behind, that he may mildly suffer, for God's sake, whatsoever adversities shall befall him from others.

He wears the cross before him, that he may bewail his own sins: and behind him, that through compassion, he may lament the sins of others, and know that he is placed, as it were, a mediator betwixt God and the sinner.

Neither ought he to cease from prayer and the holy oblation, till he be favoured with the grace and mercy which he implores.

When a priest celebrates, he honours God, he rejoices the angels, he edifies the church, he helps the living, *he obtains rest for the*

dead, and makes himself partaker of all that is good.

Practical Reflections.

Of the holy dispositions with which the priest should celebrate Mass, and with which a christian should assist at it, in order to hear it with advantage.

The priest, by his ordination, has received the power of consecration, so that, according to St. Augustin, God as it were, becomes again incarnate, and takes upon himself a new life, in the hands of the priest by virtue of his word. It is this power, which, in some sense, makes him superior to the angels, and exalts him in dignity above all other creatures.

Such being thy exalted dignity, O priest of the Lord, how great must thy obligations be! Thy endeavour should be to cherish within thee, throughout the day, the same dispositions with which thou shouldst approach the altar. Keep thyself closely united to God, recollected in his presence, faithful to his graces, and diligent in all duties; cherish continually within thy soul, and offer to Jesus Christ, the sentiments and as it were the condition of a victim entirely devoted to his glory, and the salvation of souls.

When thou celebratest this adorable sacrifice, endeavour, 1st, to effect within thy own interior what Jesus accomplishes upon the

altar ; humble thyself most profoundly, and immolate thyself and thy petitions to God. 2ndly, unite the sacrifice of thy soul to that of the body and blood of Christ ; enter into his sentiments and dispositions ; as the minister of the sacrifice which he offers to his Eternal Father, by thy means for the salvation of men, offer thyself a victim of love for that God, who himself becomes the victim of his love for thee. Cease to be thy own, and become entirely his, as he becomes entirely thine upon the altar, that he may live sacramentally in thy heart, and consummate the great work of thy salvation.

The priest, who feeds upon God and is every day nourished with his body and blood, should live only for God, says St. Augustin : and if the priests of the old law were required to live holily, because they offered bread and incense to the Lord, how much more perfect should the sanctity of the priests of the new law be, who every day offer God to God himself ! How pure, exclaims St. Chrysostom, should that hand be, which immolates the body of the word incarnate, how spotless that tongue which is purpled with the blood of Jesus, and how clean that heart into which the infinite purity of a man-God is received together with all his other attributes.

Reflect then, O priest of the Lord, that Jesus Christ, the great High Priest cele-

brates Mass in thy person, and that as thou art invested with his power to consecrate upon the altar, so thou shouldst also be animated with his spirit, and conform thy life to his divine example. When thou dost pronounce the words of consecration, give thy all, thy heart, and thy whole self, together with the sacred words which thou utterest.

Whilst thou art putting on thy vestments, meditate on the mysteries of Christ's passion, which they represent, and beg pardon for thy sins, which were the cause of all his sufferings.

When going to the altar, reflect that thou art accompanying Jesus Christ in spirit to Calvary, and that thou art going to behold him, with the eyes of faith, mystically die by your hands.

At the foot of the altar, ask pardon for thy sins and for those of all the faithful, whose place thou holdest as their agent and mediator.

At the *Gloria in excelsis*, beseech God to bestow upon thee, and upon all who assist at the holy sacrifice, an efficacious will to be saved.

At the *Epistle*, conceive a holy desire that Christ may be born on the altar, and in the souls of all: such a desire as the prophets had for the coming of the Messiah, and the Apostles to establish Jesus Christ in the hearts of all mankind.

At the *Gospel*, enliven thy faith and animate thy zeal: thy faith to believe and to practise the gospel, and thy zeal to instil its maxims into others.

At the *Credo*, beseech the Lord that thy life may be conformable to thy faith.

At the *Offertory*, offer the sacrifice of the holy Mass to the honour of God, in thanksgiving for his blessings, in atonement for thy sins, to obtain all those virtues necessary for salvation, and for the relief and consolation of the souls in purgatory.

At the *Canon*, transport thyself in spirit into heaven; and endeavour there to enter into the dispositions of the Blessed Virgin, and of the Apostles, that through thee he may be born again upon the altar, and in the hearts of all the faithful.

At the *Consecration*, let all yield to God, who comes upon the altar at thy word, and takes upon himself as it were a new life.

Join thyself to his intentions, pray through his merits, immolate thy whole self to him; and overflowing with his love, present him to his Eternal Father for the living and for the dead.

At the *Pater noster*, enter into sentiments of perfect confidence in Jesus Christ.

At the dividing of the host, which mystically represents the death of Jesus Christ, beseech him to assist thee in perfectly dying to thyself, in giving thy whole heart and af-

fections to him, and to bring thee to a holy life, and a good death.

At the *Communion*, renew thy faith in the God whom thou receivest, thy confidence in thy Saviour, and thy love for thy Father, who comes to take possession of thy heart and to give thee himself as thy inheritance. Say to him with thy whole soul and all thy powers, be thou the God of my heart, and my portion for ever.

After the *Communion*, return thanks to Jesus Christ for having given himself entirely to thee, and beseech him that nothing may any more separate thee from him.

In a word, let both priests and people, after having celebrated or after having heard Mass, endeavour, by a life of separation from the vanities and pleasures of the world, by mortifying their passions, and by wholly applying themselves to their duties, to make themselves, as St. Augustin says, the one, priests of the Lord according to the spirit, and his victims according to the flesh; the other, priests, not in character and in power, but in intention, by entering into the views of Jesus Christ upon the altar. Remember how the pagans returned from Calvary, penetrated with a lively faith in Jesus Christ, overwhelmed with sorrow for their sins, and truly changed and converted; and reflect how much more you ought, after having celebrated Mass, which is the same sacrifice as that of Calvary, or after having

heard it, to be filled with contrition, for your offences, and resolved to live henceforth by faith and by hope and as victims of the love of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Prayer.

To obtain from God the grace of saying and of hearing Mass well.

O LORD, who in the adorable sacrifice of the Mass, art thyself both priest and victim, immolating thyself by our ministry, to the justice of thy Father for the salvation of men, grant that we may sacrifice our hearts in union with the sacrifice of thy body and blood, and endeavouring to produce in our souls the same that thou effectest upon the altar, employ ourselves, during the holy Mass, in the exercises of profound humility and prayer, and offer ourselves as victims for thy people in and by thee.

We offer up this adorable sacrifice, which is the same as that of Calvary, to thy honour and glory, in thanksgiving for all thy benefits, to obtain the virtues necessary for salvation, and to bring down thy mercy upon us in the forgiveness of our manifold offences. Grant, O Jesus, that the sacramental life which thou assumest on the altar, may become for us, by real or spiritual communion, the source of a new life. As thou dost here substitute thyself in place of bread and wine,

so do thou also transform us into thyself. Destroy in us whatever is not of thee, banish from our hearts all self-love by the force of thy divine charity that so we may become entirely thine.

O adorable victim of our salvation and love ! as thou makest choice of our hearts for the consummation of thy sacramental life, be pleased to complete in us the sacrifice of our whole selves to thee : suffer us not whilst we feed upon the Lamb of God, to live only as men, but enable us to imitate thee in the practice of those virtues which in the holy communion thou comest to imprint in our souls. Amen.



Chapter Sixth.

A petition concerning the exercise proper before communion.

[*Disciple.*] I. WHEN I consider thy greatness, O Lord, and my own vileness, I tremble very much, and am confounded in myself.

For if I come not to thee, I fly from life ; and if I intrude myself unworthily, I incur thy displeasure.

What then shall I do, O my God, my Helper, my Counsellor in necessities ?

II. Do thou teach me the right way: appoint me some short exercise proper for the holy communion.

For it is necessary to know in what manner I shall reverently and devoutly prepare my heart for thee, for the profitable receiving of thy sacrament, or for celebrating so great and divine a sacrifice.

Practical Reflections.

ONE of the best dispositions for worthily receiving the holy communion, is to be resolved that Jesus shall reign for ever the God of our hearts, that is, that we will obey him in all things, and refuse him nothing that he demands of us, for it is in quality of king that he comes to us, and as the king of all bounty; he comes into our souls to be again born there, and to reign over our passions and affections.

Prayer.

Yes, my Saviour, when I communicate I indeed make thee the master, the king, and the God of my heart; I then protest sincerely, that I am entirely thine; but after receiving thee, I become again the slave of my own humour, and shaking off the sweet yoke of thy empire, I subject myself to the servitude of concupiscence. At the time of

communion, I am all thine, but soon alas ! do I again become wholly devoted to **myself**. What an injustice to thy dominion ! What an outrage on thy bounty ! thus to rob thee of a heart which upon so many titles belongs only to thee ! No, I will never again **with**-draw myself from the empire of thy love : secure to thyself thy own conquest and suffer me not to escape from thee, or ever more to be separated from thee. Amen.



Chapter Seventh.

Of the examination of one's own conscience, and of a resolution of amendment.

[*Christ.*] I. ABOVE all things, it behoves the priest of God to come to the celebrating, handling, and receiving this sacrament, with very great humility of heart, and lowly reverence ; with an entire faith, and a pious intention of the honour of God.

Diligently examine thy conscience, and to the best of thy power cleanse and purify it by true contrition and humble confession ; so that there be nothing weighty to give thee remorse, and hinder thy free access.

Repent thee of all thy sins in general, and in particular lament and grieve for thy daily offences.

And if thou hast time, confess to God, in the secret of thy heart, all the miseries of thy passions.

II. Sigh and grieve that thou art yet so carnal and worldly; so unmortified in thy passions;

So full of the motions of concupiscence; so unguarded in thy outward senses; so often entangled with many vain imaginations;

So much inclined to exterior things; so negligent as to the interior;

So easy to laughter and dissoluteness; so hard to tears and compunction;

So prone to relaxation, and to the pleasures of the flesh; so sluggish to austerity and fervour;

So curious to hear news, and to see fine sights; so remiss to embrace things humble and abject;

So covetous to possess much; so sparing in giving, so close in retaining;

So inconsiderate in speech; so little able to hold thy peace;

So disorderly in thy carriage; so over eager in thy actions;

So greedy at meat; so deaf to the word of God;

So hasty for rest; so slow to labour;

So wakeful to hear idle tales; so drowsy to watch in the service of God;

So hasty to make an end of thy prayers; so wandering as to attention; so negligent

in saying thy office ; so tepid in celebrating ;
so dry at the time of receiving ;

So quickly distracted ; so seldom quite recollected within thyself ; so easily moved to anger ; so apt to take offence at others ;

So prone to judge ; so severe in reprehending ;

So joyful in prosperity ; so weak in adversity ;

So often proposing many good things, and effecting little.

III. Having confessed and bewailed these and other, thy defects, with sorrow, and a great dislike of thy own weakness, make a strong resolution always to amend thy life, and to advance in virtue.

Then with a full resolution, and with thy whole will, offer thyself up to the honour of my name, on the altar of thy heart, as a perpetual holocaust, by committing faithfully to me both thy soul and body ;

That so thou mayest be worthy to approach to offer up sacrifice to God, and to receive for thy salvation the sacrament of my body.

IV. For there is no oblation more worthy, nor satisfaction greater, for the washing away of sins, than to offer up thyself purely and entirely to God, together with the oblation of the body of Christ, in the mass and in the communion.

If a man does what lies in him, and is truly penitent ; as often as he shall come to

me for pardon and grace; *As I live saith the Lord, who will not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; I will no longer remember his sins,* but all shall be forgiven him. Ezek. xviii.

Practical Reflections.

I. THE first disposition for a worthy communion, is purity of heart, which consists in detachment from all wilful sin, and the affection to it. It is, in this sense, that St. Augustin, speaking to priests and those who communicate, says, that we must approach the altar in the garb of innocence. You should therefore, before communion, carefully examine your conscience in detail upon your ordinary faults. See before God if there be not some considerable sin upon your soul, and if so, confess it with sincere sorrow; for in this case, it is not sufficient, says the Council of Trent, to make an act of contrition, you must also go to confession, before you approach to the holy communion. In this manner it explains those words of St. Paul, "*let a man prove himself,*" that so he may be prepared to receive worthily this heavenly bread, and may not eat it to his own condemnation.

II. Be not satisfied with examining whether your conscience reproaches you with

any considerable sin; but examine also before God, and detest even the smallest sins which you so easily commit, especially such as are knowingly committed against the inspirations of grace; sins of habit, of attachment, and of indisposition, that is, those which are most consonant with your natural inclinations; the sins which you may have occasioned in others, or in which you have participated; hidden sins, &c. Ask pardon for them of Jesus Christ, before you receive him, and pray for grace to correct them, and to punish yourself for having committed them.

Prayer.

An act of contrition before communion.

I COME to thee, O Jesus, as a sick man to his physician, in hopes of obtaining a cure. Thou hast said that those who are afflicted with disease, should approach to him who is able and willing to heal them, wherefore do I desire to approach to thee and to receive thee frequently, the true physician, and Saviour of my soul, for I have need of thee to heal my many maladies. To thee do I cry with the leper in the gospel: *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

Inspire me with the same holy confidence with which the sick during thy life-time, presented themselves before thee. Grant that like them, I may say within myself, "*If I*

shal' but touch the hem of his garment," that is the appearances under which thou art concealed, *I shall be healed.* With the like confidence, I approach and prostrate myself at thy sacred feet, and beg pardon for all the sins of my whole life, which I detest from my heart, for the love of thee.

Pardon, O Jesus, pardon me all that is displeasing to thee. Suffer me not to receive thee unworthily. I am truly sorry for having outraged thy goodness, provoked thy anger, resisted thy grace, and the allurements of thy love. I have offended all thy divine perfections; forgive and chastise me, and let my punishment be to hate myself and to love thee. To thee alone do I address my grief, I have outraged thee, and for this will I live and die in the sorrows of repentance. Take from me life, or take away sin, for I can no longer live and offend thee: I desire to avoid everything that is displeasing to thee, or can in any degree remove or separate me from thee. Amen.



Chapter Eighth.

Of the oblation of Christ on the cross, and of the resignation of ourselves.

[*Christ.*] I. AS I willingly offered myself to God, my Father, for thy sins with my hands stretched out upon the cross, and my body naked, so that nothing remained in me, which was not turned into a sacrifice, to appease the divine wrath:

Even so must thou willingly offer thyself to me daily in the mass, for a pure and holy oblation, together with all thy powers and affections, as heartily as thou art able.

What do I require more of thee, than that thou endeavour to resign thyself entirely to me?

Whatsoever thou givest besides thyself, I regard not; for I seek not thy gift, but thyself.

II. As it would not suffice thee, if thou hadst all things but me; so neither can it please me, whatever thou givest, as long as thou offerest not thyself.

Offer thyself to me, and give thy whole self for God, and thy offering will be accepted.

Behold, I offered my whole self to the Fa-

ther for thee, and have given my whole body and blood for thy food, that I might be all thine, and thou mightest be always mine.

But if thou wilt stand upon thy own bottom, and wilt not offer thyself freely to my will, thy offering is not perfect, nor will there be an entire union betwixt us.

Therefore, before all thy works, thou must make a free oblation of thyself into the hands of God, if thou desire to obtain liberty and grace :

For the reason why so few become illuminated and internally free, is because they do not wholly renounce themselves.

My sentence stands firm, *Unless a man renounce all, he cannot be my disciple.* Luke xiv.

If, therefore, thou desire to be my disciple, offer up thyself to me with all thy affections.

Practical Reflections.

BE not of the number of those who, when they communicate, give themselves entirely to God, and immediately after, return to themselves; whose lives being a constant succession of good desires and sinful actions, are never firmly established either in the fear or love of God. It is of such souls, who are thus mean and ungenerous towards a God who is so prodigal of himself towards

them, that the prophet speaks when he says, "*On account of the iniquity of his covetousness, I was angry, and I struck him; I hid my face from thee, and was angry; and he went away wandering, in the way of his own heart.*" Isaiah, lvii. 17.

Prayer.

YES, O Lord, thou art now the God of my heart, for thou comest to take possession of it, and to give me thyself to repose within it. Mayest thou be so in all things and for ever; mayest thou alone be the God of my soul in time, that thou mayest be my portion for eternity. Unite me to thyself, by making me like to thee, meek, humble, patient, and charitable. Suffer not the union with which I am now honoured, to remain ineffective, like that of a dry branch with the sap of the vine, or languid like that of a paralyzed arm with a vigorous body; but grant that it may become lively, vivifying and perpetual, like that of food with the body which it nourishes. Amen.

Chapter Ninth.

That we must offer ourselves, and all that is ours,
to God, and pray for all.

[*Disciple.*] I. LORD, all things are
thine that are in heaven and earth.

I desire to offer up myself to thee as a vo-
luntary oblation, and to remain for ever thine.

Lord, in the sincerity of my heart, I offer
myself to thee this day, to be thy servant
evermore, to serve thee, and to become a
sacrifice of perpetual praise to thee.

Receive me with this sacred oblation of
thy precious body, which I offer to thee this
day, in the presence of thy angels invisibly
standing by, that it may be for mine and all
the people's salvation.

II. Lord, I offer to thee all my sins and
offences, which I have committed in thy
sight, and that of thy holy angels, from the
day that I was first capable of sin until this
hour, upon thy propitious altar, that thou
mayest burn and consume them all with the
fire of thy charity, and mayest remove all
the stains of my sins, and cleanse my con-
science from all offences, and restore to me
thy grace, which I have lost by sin, by fully
pardoning me all, and mercifully receiving
me to the kiss of peace.

III. What can I do for my sins, but humbly confess them, and lament them, and incessantly implore thy mercy for them ?

Hear me, I beseech thee, in thy mercy, where I stand before thee, O my God.

All my sins displease me exceedingly : I will never commit them any more : I am sorry for them, and will be sorry for them as long as I live : I am willing to do penance for them, and to make satisfaction to the utmost of my power.

Forgive, O my God, forgive me my sins, for thy holy name's sake. Save my soul, which thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.

Behold I commit myself to thy mercy ; I resign myself into thy hands.

Deal with me according to thy goodness, not according to my wickedness and iniquity.

IV. I offer also to thee all the good I have, though very little and imperfect ; that thou mayest make it better and sanctify it ; that thou mayest be pleased with it, and make it acceptable to thee, and perfect it more and more ; and mayest moreover bring me, who am a slothful and unprofitable wretch, to a good and happy end.

V. I offer to thee also all the godly desires of thy devout servants, the necessities of my parents, friends, brethren, sisters, and all those that are dear to me : and of all such as, for the love of thee, have been benefac-

tors to me or others; or who have desired and begged of me to offer up prayers and masses for themselves and all that belonged to them; whether they live as yet in the flesh, or whether they are now departed out of the world;

That they all may be sensible of the assistance of thy grace, of the benefit of thy comfort, of thy protection from all dangers, and of a deliverance from their pains: and that being freed from all evils, they may with joy give worthy thanks to thee.

VI. I offer up also to thee my prayers, and this sacrifice of propitiation, for them in particular who have in any thing wronged me, grieved me, or abused me, or have done me any damage or displeasure:

And for all those likewise whom I have at any time grieved, troubled, injured, or scandalized, by words or deeds, knowingly or unknowingly; that it may please thee to forgive us all our sins and offences one against another.

Take, O Lord, from our hearts all jealousy, indignation, wrath, and contention, and whatsoever may hurt charity, and lessen brotherly love.

Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on those that crave thy mercy; give grace to them that stand in need thereof: and grant that we may be worthy to enjoy thy grace, and that we may attain to life everlasting. Amen.

Practical Reflections.

WEARY of the servitude of our passions, and fatigued with the inefficacy of our desires, by which we promise God what we never perform, and pretend to be his, without ceasing to be our own, or weaning ourselves from the world and vanity, let us now at least, after having received him, make a firm resolution of giving ourselves really to him, and of dedicating and consecrating ourselves to his love. It is time, O my Saviour, that this heart which was made for thy love, and redeemed by thy blood, should for ever cease to be devoted to itself, and become wholly and irrevocably thine : and I protest at thy sacred feet, that such is my ardent desire. This heart has received thee, my Jesus ! and thou desirest to consummate within it that new life which thou hast assumed on the altar, to make it a victim of thy love. Sacrifice then to thy father thy holy life, and my life of sin ; and never suffer me to recall that heart which on this day I wholly give to thee.

Prayer.

I ADORE thee, O Jesus, with reverence, as my God, with confidence as my Saviour, with love as my Father, and with humble fear

as my Judge. When thou shalt come to judge me, thou who hast now come to enter into my soul to sanctify and to save it, condemn me not. I offer thee the holy Mass which I have heard, and the communion which I have received, to obtain the pardon of all my sins, for the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of all the just. Enlighten my understanding, change my heart, regulate my life, suppress my passions, and as my absolute master, reign entirely over me. Would that I could make thee known and loved by all the world! I would willingly give my life to procure for thee the glory and the delight of beholding all mankind subjected to thy empire. Grant, O Jesus, I may seek only to please thee in all things, and that detached from all things, I may unite myself to thy love, and thus commence in time, what, I hope in thy great mercy to continue throughout eternity. Amen.

Chapter Tenth.

That the holy communion is not lightly to be forborne.

[*Christ.*] I. THOU oughtest often to have recourse to the Fountain of Grace, and of Divine Mercy; to the Fountain of all

Goodness and all purity; that thou mayest be healed of thy passions and vices, and be made more strong and vigilant against all the temptations and deceits of the devil.

The enemy knowing the very great advantage and remedy which is in the holy communion, strives by all means and occasions, as much as he is able, to withdraw and hinder faithful and devout persons from it.

II. For when some are preparing themselves for the sacred communion, they suffer the greater assaults of Satan.

This wicked spirit, as it is written in Job, cometh amongst the sons of God, to trouble them with his accustomed malice, or to make them over fearful and perplexed, that so he may diminish their devotion, or by his assaults take away their faith, if haply they may altogether forbear the communion, or at least approach it with tepidity,

But there is no regard to be had to his wiles and suggestions, be they never so filthy and abominable; but all his attempts are to be turned back upon his own head.

The wretch is to be contemned and scorned, nor is the holy communion to be omitted for his assaults, and the commotions which he causeth.

III. Oftentimes also a person is hindered by too great a solicitude for obtaining devotion, and a certain anxiety about making his confession.

Follow herein the counsel of the wise, and put away all anxiety and scruple; for it hinders the grace of God, and destroys devotion.

Leave not the holy communion for every small trouble and vexation, but go quickly to confession, and willingly forgive others their offences against thee.

And if thou hast offended any one, humbly crave pardon, and God will readily forgive thee.

IV. What doth it avail thee to delay thy confession for a long time, or to put off the holy communion?

Purge thyself with speed, spit out the venom, presently make haste to take this remedy, and thou shalt find it to be better for thee than if thou hadst deferred it for a long time.

If thou lettest it alone to-day for this cause, perhaps to-morrow a greater will fall out, and so thou mayest be hindered a long time from communion, and become more unfit.

With all possible speed shake off this heaviness and sloth, for it is to no purpose to continue long in uneasiness, to pass a long time in trouble, and for these daily impediments to withdraw thyself from these divine mysteries.

Yea, it is very hurtful to defer the communion long; for this usually causes a great lukewarmness and numbness.

Alas! some tepid and dissolute people willing to put off their confession, assure that their communion should be deferred, lest they should be obliged thereupon to keep a stricter watch over themselves.

V. Ah! how little is their love of God, how weak is their devotion, who so far are put by the sacred communion!

How happy is he, and acceptable to God, who so liveth, and keepeth his conscience in such purity as to be ready and well disposed to communicate every day, if it were permitted, and he might do it without any hindrance.

If sometimes a person abstains out of necessity, or by reason of some lawful impediment, he is to be commended for his piety and diligence:

But if sloth steal upon him, he must stir up himself, and do what lieth in him. God will assist his desire for his good, which he chiefly regards.

VI. And when he is lawfully hindered, he must yet always have a good will and intention to communicate, and so he will not lose the fruit of the sacrament.

For every devout man may every day, and every hour receive Christ spiritually, without any prohibition, and with great profit to his soul.

And yet on certain days, and at the times appointed, he ought, with an affectionate reverence, to receive sacramentally the

of his Redeemer, and rather aim at the praise and honour of God, than seek his own comfort:

For he communicates mystically, and is invisibly fed, as often as he devoutly calleth to mind the mystery of the incarnation and passion of Christ, and is inflamed with the love of him.

VII. He that prepareth not himself, but when a festival draweth near, or when custom compelleth him thereunto, shall often be unprepared.

Blessed is he that offereth himself up as an holocaust to the Lord, as often as he celebrates or communicates.

Be neither too long nor too hasty in celebrating, but observe the good common manner of those with whom thou livest.

Thou oughtest not to be tedious and troublesome to others, but to keep the common way, according to the appointment of superiors, and rather suit thyself to the profit of others, than to thine own inclination of devotion.

Practical Reflections.

I. THE ardent desire which Jesus Christ has to come and take possession of our hearts, that he may reign there as God, should convince us that we afford him a real pleasure by worthy and frequent communion; and

that by staying away from the holy communion, apparently from respect, but in reality from sloth, as is the case with many Christians, we deprive Jesus Christ of the satisfaction he would have in remaining with us, as he says in these words; *My delight is to be with you children of men.* To abstain from the holy communion, through our own fault from the holy communion, is to oppose the designs of his wisdom; to interrupt the connecting links of his grace and destination, because it is to deprive ourselves of one of the most effectual means of obtaining the salvation of our souls, a very frequent participation of the holy communion, (for these two should never be separated) and it is to expose ourselves to the danger of losing those graces upon which depends our eternity.

II. Now the most essential dispositions for good and frequent communion are: 1stly, a fixed resolution never to commit a mortal sin; 2ndly, to be determined, after confession, to amend our faults and to live a truly christian life; 3rdly, to trust in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament, and the efficacy of his grace to serve us in this twofold resolution. Habitual sinners who communicate frequently, on account of their unworthiness, must renounce their bad habits, as *themselves* beforehand, that they may not receive to their own condemnation.

ly souls who excuse themselves from frequent communion, under the specious pretext of their attachment to the world, must wean themselves from the vanities, amusements, and engagements of a worldly life, that they may be properly disposed to communicate frequently and worthily : and pious persons who would approach but seldom, for fear of an unworthy communion, must not absent themselves through false humility, but, as the author says, humble themselves and approach.

Prayer.

TRULY, O Lord, I do not deserve to be admitted at thy holy table, as a child in his father's house, because I have rendered myself unworthy of this honour, by my sins and infidelities ; but as thou invitest all to come to thee, who labour and are heavy laden with the weight of their miseries, promising to refresh and to comfort them, I will pay more regard to thy mercy than to my own wretchedness.

Thou sayest in the gospel, O Jesus, that those who are sick, stand in need of a physician ; I will therefore frequently approach thee, for I have great need of the abundance of thy graces, and of the multitude of thy mercies, to keep me in thy love, to preserve me from sin, and to defend me against the enemies of my salvation.

I feel no devotion when I go to communion; but it is not necessary sensibly to experience thy consolations and graces, but only to be faithful to them; and frequent communion is the means of inspiring me with this fidelity, since the fruit of a good communion is not always spiritual sweetness, but strength to conquer ourselves, and fidelity in the discharge of our duties.

I am indeed subject to many faults, weak, slothful, and inconstant in thy service: but who is so able to correct me of my weaknesses, and to alleviate my miseries, as thou, my Jesus, who art the God of mercy and the bread of the strong.

I beseech thee, therefore, O my most amiable Saviour, to grant me the dispositions necessary for frequent and worthy communion. Come, my Jesus, come often into my heart, thou who art the life of my soul, for I desire to live only for and by thee. Amen.



Chapter Eleventh.

That the body of Christ and the holy Scriptures are most necessary to a faithful soul.

[*Disciple.*] I. O SWEETEST Lord Jesus, how great sweetness hath a devout soul

that feasteth with thee in thy banquet: where there is no other meat set before her to be eaten but thyself, her only Beloved, and most to be desired, above all the desires of her heart.

And to me indeed it would be delightful to pour out tears in thy presence, with the whole affection of my heart, and like the devout Magdalen to wash thy feet with my tears.

But where is this devotion, where is this so plentiful shedding of holy tears?

Surely in the sight of thee, and of thy holy angels, my whole heart ought to be inflamed and to weep for joy:

For I have thee in the sacrament truly present, though hidden under another form.

II. For to behold thee in thine own divine brightness, is what mine eyes would not be able to endure, neither could the whole world subsist in the splendour of the glory of thy Majesty.

In this, therefore thou condescendest to my weakness, that thou hidest thyself under the sacrament.

I truly have and adore him whom the angels adore in heaven; but I as yet in *faith*, they by *sight*, and without a veil.

I must be content with the light of *true faith*, and walk therein till the day of eternal brightness break forth, and the shades of figures pass away.

But when that which is perfect shall come, the use of sacraments shall cease: for the blessed in heavenly glory stand not in need of the veils of sacraments.

For they rejoice without end in the presence of God, beholding his glory face to face; and being transformed from glory, into the glory of the incomprehensible Deity, they taste the *Word of God made flesh*, as he was from the beginning, and as he remaineth for ever.

III. When I call to mind these wonders, even every spiritual comfort becomes grievously tedious to me; because, as long as I behold not my Lord openly in his glory, I make no account of whatsoever I see and hear in the world.

Thou art my witness, O God, that not one thing can comfort me, nor anything created give me rest, but only thou, my God, whom I desire for ever to contemplate.

But this is not possible whilst I remain in this mortal life;

And therefore I must endeavour to acquire much patience, and submit myself to thee in all my desires.

For thy saints also, O Lord, who now rejoice with thee in the kingdom of heaven, whilst they were living, expected in faith and great patience, the coming of thy glory.

What they believed, I believe: what they hoped for, I hope for; and whither they

are come, I trust that I also, through thy grace, shall come.

In the mean time, I will walk in faith, strengthened by the examples of thy saints.

I shall have moreover for my comfort, and the direction of my life, thy holy books; and above all these things thy most holy body for a singular remedy and refuge.

IV. For in this life I find there are two things especially necessary for me, without which, this miserable life would be insupportable.

Whilst I am kept in the prison of this body, I acknowledge myself to need two things, viz. *food and light*.

Thou hast therefore given to me, weak as I am, thy sacred body for the nourishment of my soul and body, and thou hast set *thy word as a light to my feet*. Ps. cxviii.

Without these two I could not well live; for the word of God is the light of my soul, and thy sacrament is the *bread of life*.

These also may be called the two tables set on the one side, and on the other, in the storehouse of the *holy church*.

One is the table of the *holy altar*, having the *holy bread*, that is the precious *body of Christ*;

The other is that of the *divine law*, containing *holy doctrine*, teaching the *right faith*, and firmly leading even within the *veil*, where are the *Holy of holies*.

Thanks be to thee, O Lord Jesus, Light of eternal Light, for the table of *holy doctrine* which thou hast afforded us by the ministry of thy servants, the prophets and apostles, and other teachers.

V. Thanks be to thee, O thou Creator and Redeemer of men, who to manifest thy love to the whole world, hast prepared a great supper, wherein thou hast set before us to be eaten, not the typical lamb, but thy most sacred holy body and blood; rejoicing all the faithful with thy holy banquet, and replenishing them with the cup of salvation, in which are all the delights of Paradise; and the holy angels do feast with us, but with a more happy sweetness.

VI. O how great and honourable is the office of priests, to whom it is given to consecrate with sacred words the Lord of Majesty; to bless *him* with their lips, to hold *him* with their hands, to receive *him* with their own mouth, and to administer *him* to others!

O! how clean ought those hands to be, how pure that mouth, how holy that body, how unspotted the heart of a priest, into whom the Author of Purity so often enters!

From the mouth of a priest nothing but what is *holy*, no word but what is *good* and *profitable*, ought to proceed, who so often receives the sacrament of Christ.

VII. His *eyes* ought to be *simple* and

chaste, which are used to behold the body of Christ; his hands *pure* and lifted up to heaven, which are used to handle the Creator of heaven and earth.

Unto the priests especially it is said in the law, *Be you holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.* Lev. xix. 20.

VIII. Let thy grace, O Almighty God assist us, that we, who have undertaken the office of priesthood, may serve thee worthily and devoutly in all purity and good conscience.

And if we cannot live in so great innocency as we ought, grant us at least to bewail the sins which we have committed; and in the spirit of humility, and the resolution of a good will to serve thee more fervently for the time to come.

Practical Reflections.

The reading of pious books is a means of obtaining the dispositions for communion, and of preserving the fruit thereof in the soul.

God heretofore gave the Israelites in the desert, a pillar of fire to light and to guide them, and manna to support them in their journey to the promised land. In like manner has our Lord given us pious books to enlighten us, and the adorable sacrament of his body and blood to nourish us in our way

to heaven. We should therefore, make frequent use of both, in order to arrive there; of good books that we may not go astray, and of the divine Eucharist that we may be strengthened to walk in that narrow path which leads to paradise.

On this account, it is proper, on the eve and on the day of communion to read some pious book, which treats of the blessed sacrament, in order to keep up in the soul that spirit of fervour, fidelity, and love towards God, and that sacred fire which Jesus Christ himself comes to enkindle within us. That all-divine discourse, which Jesus made to his Apostles, after the institution of the most holy sacrament, may be read; but we should read the Scriptures in those sentiments in which the Holy Spirit composed them, we should read them with that faith, respect, and docility, which they merit, and with which they inspire those who read them frequently and in a proper manner; we should read them with all the attention due to the presence of God, with an ardent desire to profit by them, and to derive nourishment from them, confidently having recourse to the Holy Spirit, who dictated them.

Prayer.

O MY Saviour, who hast so abundantly provided us with pious books, to serve us as

a bright shining light to withdraw or to preserve us from those wanderings which are so dangerous to our souls, enlighten our minds with the truths we read, and move our hearts to practise them. Grant that they may be our consolation in trouble, our support in difficulties, and the rule of our whole conduct. But grant also, O word incarnate, that we may hear thy voice speaking to our hearts, when we read thy gospel with our lips, and that through the respect we owe to thy divine word, we may endeavour to put it in practice on those occasions, when we have need of it, since it is not less necessary to practise the holy maxims of the gospel, than it is to believe them. Amen.



Chapter Twelfth.

That he who is to communicate ought to prepare himself for Christ with great diligence.

[*Christ.*] I. I AM the Lover of Purity, and the Giver of all Holiness.

I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of my rest.

Make ready for me a large upper room furnished, and I will make the Pasch with thee, together with my disciples. Mark xiv.

If thou wilt have me come to thee; and

remain with thee, purge out the old leaven, and make clean the habitation of thy heart;

Shut out the whole world, and all the tumult of vices; sit like a sparrow solitary on the house top, and think of thy excesses in the bitterness of thy soul:

For every lover prepareth the best and fairest room for his dearly beloved; and hereby is known the affection of him that entertaineth his beloved.

II. Know nevertheless, that thou canst not sufficiently prepare thyself by the merit of any action of thine, although thou shouldst prepare thyself a whole year together, and think of nothing else.

But it is of my mere goodness and grace that thou art suffered to come to my table; as if a beggar should be invited to dinner by a rich man who hath nothing else to return him for his benefits, but to humble himself, and to give him thanks.

Do what lieth in thee, and do it diligently; not out of custom, nor for necessity; but with fear, and reverence, and affection, receive the body of thy beloved Lord, thy God, who vouchsafeth to come to thee.

I am he that have invited thee; I have commanded it to be done; I will supply what is wanting in thee; come and receive me.

III. When I bestow the grace of devotion, give thanks to thy God, not for that thou

art worthy, but because I have had mercy on thee.

If thou hast it not, but rather findest thyself dry, continue in prayer, sigh and knock at the gate of Divine mercy; and give it not over till thou receivest some crumb or drop of divine grace.

Thou hast need of me, not I of thee.

Neither dost thou come to sanctify me, but I come to sanctify and make thee better.

Thou comest that thou mayest be sanctified by me, and united to me; that thou mayest receive new grace, and be inflamed anew to amendment.

Neglect not this grace, but prepare thy heart with all diligence, and bring thy beloved into thy heart.

IV. But thou oughtest not only to prepare thyself by devotion before communion, but carefully also to keep thyself therein after receiving the sacrament: neither is the carefully guarding of thyself afterwards less required than the devoutly preparing thyself before: for a good guard afterwards is the best preparation for again obtaining of greater grace.

For what renders a man very much indisposed is, if he presently turns himself to seek exterior comforts.

Beware of much talk, remain in secret, and enjoy thy God: for thou hast him, whom all the world cannot take from thee.

I am he to whom thou oughtest to give thy whole self; so that thou mayest henceforward live, without all solicitude, not in thyself, but in me.

Practical Reflections.

That it is necessary to nourish ourselves with the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

As the blessed Eucharist is a sacrament in which we find a heaven upon earth, and God himself in us, as it is the greatest prodigy of God's love for man, so to profit by it we must approach to it. A lively faith, a firm hope, and an ardent love of Jesus Christ must accompany us, trusting that he will supply our deficiency in these three virtues, and increase them within us in proportion as we communicate frequently, and as far as we are able, worthily. Hence those who would stay away from the holy communion because they do not sensibly experience the holy impression of these virtues, nor an ardent desire to receive Jesus Christ, should not on this account deprive themselves of it: because it is necessary to enable them to practise the virtues of christianity, and the duties of their state of life, but should receive their blessed Saviour on account of the need they have of him.

The holy martyrs of the primitive church, before they appeared at the tribunals of their

judges, there to confess their faith, were accustomed to receive the holy communion ; for they did not think themselves, says St. Cyprian, in a fit state without it, or as having sufficient strength to undergo the torments of martyrdom. In like manner should christians, in order to fight against their passions, and to resist the temptations of the devil, clothe and nourish themselves with the virtue of the body and blood of Jesus Christ ; without which, they must be in danger of falling and of being lost.

Prayer.

O JESUS, the bread of Angels ! the divine and necessary nourishment of my soul ! what should I be without thee ? How truly might I exclaim with the psalmist, *I am smitten like grass, and my heart is withered because I forgot to eat my bread !* 'Thou hast said in the gospel, that if thou shouldst suffer the people who had followed thee into the desert, to return fasting to their homes, they would faint in the way. This evil would surely befall me, my Saviour, were I not to be nourished with thy body and blood. Weak as I am of myself, and becoming still weaker from the neglect of that divine food which is my strength and my spiritual life, I should soon grow feeble and unequal to contend with my passions.

How, O my Jesus, wilt thou be the God of my heart, and my portion for eternity, if thou dost not now take possession of it in the holy communion, and commence within it that holy alliance, which thou desirest to perfect in heaven? Come then, my Saviour, come to me often, that I may never be separated from thee. Amen.



Chapter Thirteenth.

That a devout soul ought to desire with her whole heart to be united to Christ in this sacrament.

[*Disciple.*] I. WHO will give me, O Lord, to find thee alone, that I may open my whole heart to thee, and enjoy thee as my soul desireth: no one beholding me, nor any creature interesting me, or at all affecting me; but thou alone speaking to me and I to thee; as the *Beloved* is wont to speak to his *Beloved*, and a friend to entertain himself with his friend.

This I pray for, this I desire, that I may be wholly united to thee, and may withdraw my heart from all created things: and by the holy communion, and often celebrating, may more and more learn to relish heavenly and eternal things.

Ah! Lord God, when shall I be wholly

united to thee, and absorpt in thee, and altogether forgetful of myself!

Thou in me, and I in thee; and so grant us both to continue in one.

II. Verily, thou art my *Beloved*, the choicest amongst thousands, in whom my soul is well pleased to dwell all the days of her life.

Verily, thou art my Peace-maker, in whom is sovereign peace and true rest: out of whom is labour and sorrow, and endless misery.

Thou art in truth, a hidden God, and thy counsel is not with the wicked; but thy conversation is with the humble and the simple.

O how sweet is thy spirit, O Lord, who to shew thy sweetness towards thy children, vouchsafest to feed them with the most delicious bread which cometh down from heaven!

Surely, there is no other nation so great, that hath their God so nigh to them, as thou our God art present to thy faithful; to whom, for their daily comfort, and for the raising up their hearts to heaven, thou givest thyself to be eaten and enjoyed.

III. For what other nation is there so honoured as the christian people?

Or what creature under heaven so beloved as a devout soul, into whom God cometh that he may feed her with his glorious flesh? O unspeakable grace! O wonderful condescension!

O infinite love, singularly bestowed upon man!

But what return shall I make to the Lord for this grace, and for so extraordinary a charity?

There is nothing that I can give him that will please him better than if I give up my heart entirely to God, and unite it closely to him.

Then all that is within me, shall rejoice exceedingly when my soul shall be perfectly united to my God: then will he say to me, If thou wilt be with me, I will be with thee; and I will answer him, Vouchsafe, O Lord, to remain with me, and I will willingly be with thee.

This is my whole desire, that my heart may be united to thee.

Practical Reflections.

Of the ends for which Jesus Christ is present upon our altars, and of the pious dispositions with which we should visit the blessed sacrament, and assist at Mass and Benediction.

THE Son of God remains upon our altars not only during Mass, but likewise at other times; 1st, to hear and favourably to receive our prayers, and to continue the same mediation between God and man, which he exercised upon the cross; 2ndly, to receive our visits, our homage, and adorations;

hence, those christians who seldom visit him, coldly, through custom, or with indifference, are highly blameable for thus appearing before their God, their Saviour, and their Judge, without either reverence, love, or fear; 3rdly, to console us under afflictions, to support us in difficulties, and to resolve and dissipate our doubts according to what is written: *Let us go to the son of Joseph, and he will console us;** and as a prophet said to a prince, who sent to consult a false God, *Is it because there is no God in Israel?* 4thly, to be our nourishment during life, and our viaticum at the hour of death.

How should a christian who has recourse to Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament with assiduity, respect, and gratitude, as to his king, his God, and his Saviour; who never omits hearing Mass but from necessity, and when he assists it or at Benediction, endeavours to attend with a spirit of religion, that he may depart affected, converted, and a better man; how, I say, should a christian who is faithful in the discharge of all pious duties towards Jesus Christ, immolated for him on the altar, repose his confident hope in his bounty and mercies, both in life and in death! Will not however the Son of God have reason, one day to reproach

* St. Joseph passed for the father of Jesus Christ, but was only his foster parent.

multitudes of christians who either neglect to visit him in the most holy sacrament, or do so with very little devotion, will he not have reason to reproach them with their irreverence and want of faith, saying to them, *There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you knew not.* You have neglected to know and to visit God, *who was in the midst of you.* In vain have I performed prodigies of power, wisdom, and bounty in the blessed Eucharist, that I might gain your hearts; you would not interrupt your employments nor even your pleasures, to come and pay me your homage.

To answer the ends therefore for which Jesus Christ is always present in the most holy sacrament, we should visit him, hear Mass, and attend at Benediction, with all the respect and submission of courtiers before their king, with the recollection and fervour of angels before their God, with the humble fear of criminals before their judge, and with the confidence and love of children before their father.

Prayer.

Which may be recited either during Mass, or at Benediction, or when visiting the Blessed Sacrament.

I. I adore thee, O sovereign majesty, who residest upon our altars to receive our homage, and dost there annihilate and im-

molate thyself in honour of thy eternal Father, to come and reign in our hearts. I profoundly pay thee all the homage due to a God who is to decide my eternal doom. I prostrate myself before thee, I desire to join in the profound adorations of the seraphim, who assist around the altar, and I beseech thee to accept their recollection and their love to supply for the wanderings of my mind, and the indifference of my heart.

II. Penetrated with sorrow and confusion for the irreverences and indecencies which I have dared to commit in thy presence, and for those also of all other christians, I most humbly crave pardon for them, and am resolved to make amends for them, by appearing before thee with all that modesty, all that reserve, all that respect, and all that spirit of religion, with which I ought to present myself in thy presence. I desire to satisfy thy justice, for all the outrages thou hast received from impious libertines and heretics in the most holy sacrament. Forgive them, O Lord, for they know thee not; and cause me to suffer the temporal punishment which they have deserved, rather than abandon and punish them for ever.

Grant, O adorable victim of thy love, and of our salvation, grant that faith may immolate my mind, charity consecrate my heart, and religion sacrifice my whole being to thee; and that so long as I shall be in thy

house, my eyes may behold only thee, my heart overflow with thy love, and my tongue proclaim thy praise in prayer and supplication.

III. While the angels lie prostrate before thee, O great God, and struck with humble fear, fervently pay thee their tribute of profound respect and ardent love, shall we, mortals who are the works of thy hands and the price of thy blood, appear in thy presence, with wandering eyes and dissipated minds, with cold and indifferent hearts without addressing thee, and almost without thinking of thee? O my Saviour! suffer me not to be thus wanting in the respect and love which I owe to thy greatness, and which thou dost so much the more deserve as thou dost the more humble thyself for the love of me.

IV. Inspire me with the sentiments of the publican, who dared not lift up his eyes towards God, penetrated with sorrow and confusion for his sins, and of the prodigal son, when he returned to his father's house; and grant that like them, I may be restored through thy bounty and my sorrow, to thy grace and favour.

V. O my soul, behold thy God who died for thee, and of whose death thou wert the cause, how canst thou refrain from testifying thy love and gratitude towards him? O my heart, burn with love in the presence of Jesus

Christ, like the lamp* which hangs before him, and like it, consume thyself in his honour. No, I desire never to depart from thy sacramental presence, my Saviour, without being converted and becoming wholly thine. Amen.

Chapter Fourteenth.

Of the ardent desire of some devout persons to receive the body of Christ.

[Disciple.] I. *O HOW great is the abundance of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.*

When I remember some devout persons, who come to thy sacrament with the greatest devotion and affection, I am often confounded and ashamed within myself, that I approach so tepidly and coldly to thy altar, and to the table of the holy communion:

That I remain so dry, and without affection of heart: that I am not wholly set on fire in thy presence, O my God, nor so earnestly drawn and affected, as many devout persons have been, who out of a vehement desire of communion, and a sensible love in

* In catholic countries a lamp is kept continually burning in the churches before the altar, on which the blessed sacrament is kept.

their hearts, could not contain themselves from weeping;

But with their whole souls eagerly thirsted to approach, both with the mouth of their heart and their body, to thee, O God, the living Fountain: being in no wise able to moderate or satisfy their hunger, but by receiving thy body with all joy and spiritual eagerness.

II. O *true ardent faith* of these persons, being a probable argument of thy sacred presence!

For they truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, whose heart burneth so mightily within them, from Jesus walking with them. Luke xxiv.

Such affection and devotion as this, so vehement a love and burning, is often far from me.

Be thou merciful to me, O good Jesus, sweet and gracious Lord; and grant me, thy poor supplicant, to feel sometimes at least, in the sacred communion, some little of the cordial affection of thy love, that my *faith* may be more strengthened, my *hope* in thy goodness increased, and that my *charity*, being once perfectly enkindled, and having tasted the *manna* of heaven, may never decay.

III. Moreover, thy mercy is able to give me the grace I desire, and to visit me in thy great clemency with the spirit of fervour, when it shall please thee:

For though I burn not at present with so great desire as those that are so singularly devoted to thee; yet, by thy grace, I desire to have this same greatly inflamed desire; praying and wishing that I may be made partaker with all such thy fervent lovers, and numbered in their holy communion.

Practical Reflections.

How to make a good spiritual communion.

SPIRITUAL communion, which the council of Trent approves of, and so strongly advises and commends as a substitute for the sacramental and corporal reception of Jesus Christ, may be made at all times and in all places, whether we are in the presence of the blessed sacrament or not. We may make it every hour, or after a Hail Mary, said in honour of the Blessed Virgin, mother of God, uniting ourselves to those holy dispositions with which she conceived Jesus Christ in her chaste womb. We should bring our minds to a respectful remembrance of Jesus Christ in the most holy sacrament; we should there adore him, and direct our hearts towards him, as Daniel did towards the temple: we should give all to him, and ardently desire to receive him sacramentally; as however, we cannot enjoy that happiness, not being prepared, we should pray to him for the communication of his holy spirit, in place of his sacred body and blood.

But the most proper time for making a good spiritual communion, is when we assist at Mass, at the time of the priest's communion. Then, a christian animated with a lively and actual faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament, and with an ardent desire of being intimately united to him, should evince such dispositions by humbling himself profoundly, in his presence; and esteeming himself unworthy of really receiving him, implore him to come and dwell in his mind by faith, and in his heart by love and gratitude for his goodness, that so he may say with the apostle, *I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.*

Prayer.

O MOST amiable Saviour! who wast the perpetual object and reigning desire of the ancient patriarchs and prophets, and of all the saints of the Old Testament, who sighed incessantly for thy incarnation, come into my soul, which burns with the desire of receiving thee, and of being united to thee, as the author of my salvation, and the source of all good. Come and destroy within me the tyranny of sin and self-love, and establish there the reign of thy grace and charity. I have reason to judge myself unworthy of really partaking of thy body and blood, but in thy mercy grant me to partake of thy spirit,

and of thy virtues, through the desire I have of receiving thee in the most holy sacrament.

No, my Jesus, I cannot leave thee, nor live without thee; thou only canst satisfy my heart and make me happy. O ye seraphim! who ardently desire to be sacramentally united to Jesus Christ, yet cannot, I unite myself to the ardour and purity of your desires, to be united to the same God, whom with me you adore upon the altar. But O Lord, do thou come and purify my heart from all attachment to myself or to creatures, my heart which was made but to love and to possess thee. Thou only canst satisfy it and all that is not thee, is as nothing. O amiable God! O loving God! O God-love! can I know thee and not love thee, and love thee and not burn with desire to receive thee on earth, and to see and to possess thee for ever in heaven. Amen.

Chapter Fifteenth.

That the grace of devotion is obtained by humility and self-denial.

[*Christ.*] I. THOU oughtest to seek the grace of devotion earnestly, to ask it fervently, to wait for it patiently and confi-

dently, to receive it thankfully, to keep it humbly, to work with it diligently, and to commit to God the time and manner of this heavenly visitation, until it shall please him to come unto thee.

Thou oughtest chiefly to humble thyself, when thou feelest inwardly little or no devotion; and yet not be too much dejected, nor to grieve inordinately.

God often giveth in one short moment, what he hath a long time denied.

He giveth sometimes in the end, that which in the beginning of prayer he deferred to grant.

II. If grace were always presently given, and ever at hand with a wish, it would be more than man's infirmity could well bear.

Therefore the *grace of devotion* is to be expected with a good hope and humble patience. Yet impute it to thyself and to thy sins, when it is not given thee, or when it is secretly taken away.

It is sometimes a little thing that hinders or hides grace from thee; if that may be called a *little*, and not rather *great*, which hindereth so great a good.

But if thou remove this same, be it small or great, and perfectly overcome it, thou shalt have thy desire.

III. For as soon as ever thou hast delivered thyself up to God with thy whole heart, and neither seekest this nor that for thine

own pleasure or will, but wholly placest thyself in him, thou shalt find thyself united to him, and at peace; for nothing will relish so well, and please thee so much, as the good pleasure of the Divine will.

Whosoever therefore with a single heart shall direct his intention upwards to God, and purify himself from all inordinate love or dislike of any created thing, he shall be the most fit to receive grace, and worthy of the gift of devotion:

For the Lord bestows his blessing there, where he finds the vessels empty:

And the more perfectly one forsakes these things below, and the more he dies to himself by the contempt of himself, the more speedily grace cometh, entereth in more plentifully, and the higher it elevateth the free heart.

IV. *Then shall he see and abound; he shall admire, and his heart shall be enlarged* within him, because the *hand* of the Lord is with him, and he hath put himself wholly into his hand for ever. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that seeketh God with his whole heart, and taketh not his soul in vain.

Such an one as this, in receiving the holy Eucharist, obtains a great grace of divine union; because he looks not towards his own devotion and comfort, but, above all devotion and comfort, regards the honour and glory of God.

Practical Reflections.

How we are to dispose ourselves to receive the grace of the holy communion, that we may profit by it.

THE end of the holy Eucharist is to unite us intimately to Jesus Christ, and to form in our souls a moral incarnation of his spirit and his virtues: hence the holy fathers call this adorable sacrament an extension of the incarnation; it is to perpetuate the reign of his grace and love within us, and to enable us always to live a divine and supernatural life in and by him. Thus the grace which the holy communion produces in us, is conformable to the end for which it was instituted, that is, is agreeable to what Jesus Christ says of it in the gospel, for, 1st, it causes us to remain in him, forming and imprinting in our souls the character of his virtues, as a seal makes its impression upon the wax to which it is applied; 2ndly, it makes us live by him and for him, that is, act only to please him and by the influence of his love; 3rdly, it enables us to live always a life of grace. Thus the grace which Jesus Christ communicates to us in the holy communion, is to establish himself in us, to make us act in all things and live only in him and for him, and to give us eternal life. We should dispose ourselves to receive and

profit by this grace, and these three effects of a good communion; 1st, by separating ourselves from all wilful sin, and the affection for it; 2ndly, by renouncing and dying incessantly to ourselves; 3rdly, by being ever faithful to the grace of God, and in the exercise of his love.

Prayer.

I. **WHAT** confusion for me, O Jesus, to have communicated so often, and to have profited so little by my communions, to have been so frequently nourished with God, and to have lived always as man, an idle and sensual life! Pardon, my Saviour, pardon me the evil dispositions with which I have approached the holy communion, pardon me for having had so often a dissipated mind, a heart attached to self-love, and to the world, and for having done so little to acquire the dispositions for a good communion, to return thee thanks after having received it and to reap the fruit of it, which is the re-establishment of myself in fidelity and fervour.

II. How much reason have I to fear, O my Saviour, that thou wilt one day reproach me with the unfruitfulness of my communions! But ought I less to dread thy just reproach for neglecting to dispose myself for frequent and worthy communion? How I

fear lest I shall be condemned for my sloth, which has kept me away from the holy table and caused me to lose so many communions to which thou wouldst have attached the grace of my conversion!

III. I will therefore from henceforth dispose myself for worthy communion by detachment from sin and the occasions of it, and by interior acts of those virtues which I ought to exercise before, and at the time, and after the holy communion; and I will also spare no pains to profit by my communions, by endeavouring to watch over myself, to avoid all wilful faults, to do all with a view to please thee, to be faithful in my religious exercises, and to be courageous in restraining and conquering myself; for these are the true fruits of a good communion. Grant me grace to execute what now, by thy grace, thou dost inspire me to resolve. Amen.



Chapter Sixteenth.

That we ought to lay open our necessities to Christ, and crave his grace.

[*Disciple.*] I. O MOST sweet and loving Lord, whom I now desire to receive with all devotion, thou knowest my weakness, and

the necessity which I endure; in how great evils and vices I am immersed? how often I am oppressed, tempted, troubled, and defiled.

To thee I come for remedy; I pray to thee for comfort and succour; I speak to him that knows all things, to whom all that is within me is manifest, and who alone can perfectly comfort and help me. Thou knowest what good things I stand most in need of, and how poor I am in virtues.

II. Behold I stand before thee poor and naked, begging thy grace, and imploring thy mercy.

Feed thy hungry supplicant; inflame my coldness with the fire of thy love; enlighten my blindness with the brightness of thy presence;

Teach me to look upon all earthly things with disgust; to bear all things grievous and afflicting with patience; and to look upon all things created with contempt and disregard.

Lift up my heart to thee in heaven, and suffer me not to wander upon earth.

Be thou alone sweet to me from henceforth for evermore:

For thou only art my meat and drink, my love and my joy, my sweetness and all my good.

III. O that with thy presence thou wouldst inflame, burn, and transform me into thyself, that I may be made one spirit with thee,

by the grace of internal union, and by the melting of ardent love!

Suffer me not to go from thee hungry and dry, but deal with me in thy mercy, as thou hast often dealt wonderfully with thy saints.

What marvel, if I should be wholly set on fire by thee, and should die to myself; since thou art a *Fire* always burning, and never decaying; a *Love* purifying the heart and enlightening the understanding.

Practical Reflections,

FOR THIS AND THE NEXT CHAPTER.

I. THE Son of God after having taught us by his word, shewn by his example, and merited for us by his grace, the necessary and essential virtues for christian salvation, would institute the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist, to come himself and imprint them in our hearts. Of these christian virtues humility is the first, of which he gives us a splendid example in the most holy sacrament; for he is there concealed, annihilated and unknown to sense. During his mortal life the perfections of his divinity only were concealed, and as it were annihilated in his humanity; but in the blessed sacrament his humanity also lies hid, and nothing appears of a Man-God but what is seen by the eyes of faith. Here we learn how we ought to live in this world, in imi-

tation of the humility and annihilation of Jesus Christ in the most holy sacrament: 1st, to love a concealed and abject life; 2ndly, to fly from praise, esteem, and honor, and to welcome contempt as due to such sinners as ourselves; 3rdly, to endeavour to be good and virtuous without wishing to display our virtue or to perform our actions for the sake of being seen and esteemed by men, but solely to please God; 4thly, to be persuaded that man cannot honor God in any way so effectually as by abasing and humbling himself before him; 5thly, to yield to hasty persons, for the sake of peace; 6thly, never to act from human respect but from a reverential fear of God; 7thly, never to speak well of ourselves nor ill of others.

II. The Son of God gives us, in the holy Eucharist, an example of perfect obedience, and of patience, equal to all the outrages which he there receives, by the exact, continual, and miraculous obedience which he pays to the priest, immediately descending upon the altar when the words of consecration are pronounced, and remaining there until man receives him into his breast! O great God of independence and sovereignty, what a subject of confusion for us, that although thou art God, thou dost nevertheless obey man without delay, while man refuses or defers to obey thee.

I will henceforth, O my Saviour, in honor

and imitation of thy perfect obedience in the most holy sacrament, promptly, generously, and constantly obey whatever thou shalt ordain by thy inspirations, by my superiors, and by the knowledge of my duties.

III. Jesus Christ teaches and inspires us with patience by his practice of it in the holy Eucharist, in which he is an object of contempt and indecency to some, of neglect to others, and of indifference to many, who are but little devoted to God, much to the world, and wholly to themselves; in which he beholds himself exposed to the unworthy or fruitless communions of so many, whose lives are either decidedly criminal from being spent in the habit and occasion of mortal sin, or at least, are of no avail to salvation.

Nevertheless he suffers all these outrages with invincible patience, and he suffers them thus, to teach and to induce us to suffer contradictions and injuries in like manner.

IV. O my Jesus, the victim of our salvation and of our sins! why should we daily renew by our irreverence, dissipation, and indevotion, those outrages thou didst receive when dying upon the cross, and renew them even in that state in which thou art pleased to continue that all-atoning sacrifice. Pardon, O Jesus, pardon the insensibility, coldness, and indevotion, with which we have approached the holy communion, forgive us

for not having always followed the injunction which thou givest us in the gospel, of being reconciled to all mankind, before we present ourselves at the foot of thy altar. Pardon also, our impatience and the sallies of passion, which our communions have not corrected in us, because we have not profited by them! Suffer not our tongues which become the resting places of thy sacred body, and which are so often purpled with thy blood, to be employed as the instruments of our anger and maledictions. O Lord, who during thy mortal life, didst heal the most incurable diseases, arrest, I beseech thee, the impetuosity of my tongue. Yes, my Saviour, that I may reap advantage from my communions, I will never speak when my heart is moved, but sacrifice my utterance to thee, who, for my sake, didst sacrifice even the last drop of thy sacred blood.

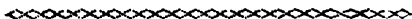
Prayer.

To obtain the fruit of a good communion.

GIVE O Jesus, to all who approach thee in the holy communion, a constant courage to conquer themselves, an exact fidelity in corresponding with thy graces, a restraint upon their tongue, a recollection of mind, and the plentitude of thy love in their hearts. For thy honour and glory, O divine Saviour,

subject us to thy dominion, and immolate us to thy greatness. Suffer not our hearts which are the conquest of thy grace, ever more to be separated from thee.

Be thou the ruler of our passions, and the God of our souls; and grant that when we communicate, and after communion, we may establish within us the reign of thy sovereignty by our submission, the reign of thy bounty by our confidence, and the reign of thy grace by our fidelity. Amen.



Chapter Seventeenth.

Of a fervent love and vehement desire to receive Christ.

[*Disciple.*] I. WITH the greatest devotion and burning love, with all the affection and fervour of my heart, I desire to receive thee, O Lord; as many saints and devout persons, who were most pleasing to thee in holiness of life, and most fervent in devotion, have desired thee, when they have communicated.

O my God, my eternal Love, my whole Good, and never-ending Happiness, I would gladly receive thee with the most vehement desire, and most worthy reverence, that any of the saints have ever had, or could experience.

II. And although I am unworthy to have all those feelings of devotion, yet I offer to thee the whole affection of my heart, as if I alone had all those highly pleasing inflamed desires.

Yea, and whatsoever a godly mind can conceive and desire: all this, with the greatest reverence and most inward affection I offer and present to thee.

I desire to reserve nothing to myself, but freely and most willingly to sacrifice myself, and all that is mine, to thee.

O Lord my God, my Creator and my Redeemer, I desire to receive thee this day with such *affection, reverence, praise, and honour*; such *gratitude, worthiness, and love*; with such *faith, hope, and purity*, as thy most holy Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, received and desired thee, when she humbly and devoutly answered the angel, who declared to her the mystery of the incarnation: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done unto me according to thy word.* Luke i.

III. And as thy blessed forerunner, the most excellent among the saints, John the Baptist, in thy presence leaped for joy through the Holy Ghost, whilst he was yet shut up in his mother's womb, and afterwards seeing Jesus walking amongst men, humbling himself exceedingly, said with devout affection, *The friend of the Bridegroom that standeth and heareth him, re-*

joiceth with joy for the voice of the Bridegroom. John iii. So I also wish to be inflamed with great and holy desires, and to present myself to thee with my whole heart.

Wherefore I here offer and present to thee the excessive joys of all devout hearts, their ardent affections, their ecstasies, and supernatural illuminations, and heavenly visions; together with all the virtues and praises which are or shall be celebrated by all creatures in heaven and earth; for myself and all such as are recommended to my prayers, that by all thou mayest be worthily praised and glorified for ever.

IV. Receive my wishes, O Lord my God, and my desires of giving thee infinite praise and immense blessing, which, according to the multitude of thy unspeakable greatness, are most justly due to thee.

These I render, and desire to render thee every day and every moment; and I invite and entreat all the heavenly spirits, and all the faithful, with my prayers and affections, to join with me in giving thee praises and thanks.

V. Let all people, tribes and tongues, praise thee, and magnify thy holy and sweet name, with the highest jubilation and ardent devotion;

And let all who reverently and devoutly celebrate thy most high sacrament, and receive it with full faith, find grace and mercy

hands, and humbly pray for me, a sinner:
 signature:

and when they shall have obtained their
 ad devotion and joyful union, and shall
 ed devotion and joyful union, and shall
 ct from thy sacred heavenly table, well
 orted, and wonderfully nourished, let
 vouchsafe to remember my poor soul.

cal Reflections and Prayer as in the preceding
 Chapter.

Chapter Eighteenth.

at a man be not a curious searcher into this sa-
 ent, but an humble follower of Christ, submitting
 ense to the holy faith.

Christ.] I. THOU must beware of cu-
 s and unprofitable searching into this
 t profound sacrament, if thou wilt not
 into the depth of doubt.

*He that is a searcher of Majesty, shall
 ppressed by glory. Prov. xxv.*

rod is able to do more than man can un-
 stand.

l pious and humble inquiry after *truth*
 olerable, which is always ready to be
 ght, and studies to walk in the sound
 trine of the Fathers.

I. Blessed is that simplicity that leaveth

the difficult ways of dispute, and goeth on in the plain and sure path of God's commandment.

Many have lost devotion, whilst they would search into high things.

It is *faith* that is required of thee and a *sincere life*; not the height of *understanding*, nor diving deep into the mysteries of God.

If thou dost not understand nor comprehend those things that are under thee, how shouldst thou comprehend those things that are above thee?

Submit thyself to God, and humble thy *sense to faith*, and the light of knowledge shall be given thee, as far as shall be profitable and necessary for thee.

III. Some are grievously tempted about faith and the sacrament; but this is not to be imputed to them, but rather to the enemy.

Be not thou anxious, stand not to dispute with thy thoughts, nor to answer the doubts which the devil suggests; but believe the words of God, believe his saints and prophets, and the wicked enemy will fly from thee.

It is often very profitable to the servants of God to suffer such things;

For the devil tempteth not unbelievers and sinners, whom he already surely possesseth; but the faithful and devout he many ways tempteth and molesteth.

IV. Go forward therefore with a sincere and undoubted faith, and with an humble reverence approach to this sacrament; and whatsoever thou art not able to understand, commit securely to God, who is *omnipotent*.

God never deceiveth; but he is deceived that trusts too much in himself.

God walketh with the simple, and revealeth himself to the humble; he giveth understanding to the little ones, openeth the gate of knowledge to pure minds, and hideth his grace from the curious and proud.

Human reason is weak, and may be deceived; but true faith cannot be deceived.

V. All reason and natural search ought to follow faith, and not to go before it, nor oppose it;

For faith and love are here predominant, and work by hidden ways in this most holy and super-excellent sacrament.

God, who is eternal and incomprehensible, and of infinite power, doth great and inscrutable things in heaven and earth, and there is no searching out his wonderful works.

If the works of God were such as might be easily comprehended by human reason, they could not be called wonderful and unspeakable.

Practical Reflections.

Faith must triumph over our senses and reason, by our firmly believing in the real presence, and humbly receiving the body and blood of Jesus, in the most holy sacrament of the altar.

I. **TAKING** it for granted that God can do more than man can comprehend; that human reason may be deceived, but that faith cannot; and that we are bound to believe Jesus Christ when he says to his apostles, *This is my body, which shall be delivered to you; this is my blood, which shall be shed for you;* we must necessarily believe without hesitation the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, in the most holy sacrament, without wishing to fathom the depth of this mystery, which is wholly incomprehensible to reason and impenetrable to human understanding, our faith supplying the defects of our senses; and contenting ourselves with thinking that as God was able to accomplish it, and has declared to us that he has done so, we must endeavour only to believe, honour, and receive Jesus Christ in the adorable Eucharist.

II. What a happiness, thus to sacrifice in this mystery of faith, as indeed in all other mysteries, the light of human reason to the truth of God's word, and the affections of our hearts to the infinite love evinced by

our Redeemer: in the institution and use of the most holy sacrament, in which, as St. Bernard says, he is all love for us; in which, according to the council of Trent, he replenishes our hearts with all the riches of his love; but of a love infinitely liberal, which induces him to give himself entirely to us, and to be even prodigal of himself: for it is, says the sacred text, in this sacrament which he instituted at the close of his life, that he gives us the most tender and sensible marks of his love for us, by uniting himself intimately to us, and us intimately to himself, to take possession from henceforth of our hearts, and to give us a pledge of possessing him for all eternity.

III. Such being the admirable designs of Jesus Christ in the most holy sacrament; it is for us to endeavour to correspond with them by a worthy and frequent use of it. A sincere and reverential faith, a christian life of detachment from the world, a profound humility, a simple docility of belief and an effectual obedience in refusing nothing required of us by Jesus Christ, when he descends into our souls, in the holy Eucharist, a dedication of our whole selves to the honour of his annihilated greatness, and in gratitude for the ardour of his love, is the whole he requires of us and all we have to do to dispose ourselves in a proper manner to receive and to profit by this holy sa-

crament. But let us always remember that he does not demand from us as a disposition for communion, that which is the effect of communion, and that, provided we approach him with a real desire of being converted, evinced by a good confession, and by a firm hope that Jesus Christ will confirm us by his presence in his grace and love, we may with confidence frequently receive the holy communion, that we may obtain courage to conquer ourselves, fidelity in our exercises of piety, and perseverance in the grace and love of God, which are the real effects of frequent and worthy communion.

Prayer.

To Jesus Christ, that he may in his bounty enable us to practise this book.

ALLOW me, O my Saviour! to offer thee with the most profound reverence, these helps to the practice of this book of thy Imitation, which thou hast inspired me to add to it, to teach and to induce all christians to apply themselves to know thee, to love thee, and to follow thee, to unite themselves to the holy dispositions of thy heart in all thy mysteries, to practise the maxims of thy gospel, and to imitate thy virtues; for it is in this, as thou tellest us, that consists all the happiness and all the merit of a christian life.

I beseech thee, O holy Virgin, mother of my God and Saviour! to obtain this grace for me, and for all who shall read these helps to the practice of this book of the Following of thy Son, and procure for us all, by thy powerful intercession, a good life, a holy death and a happy eternity. Amen.

END OF THE FOURTH AND LAST BOOK.

S. Bennett, Printer, Nottingham.

